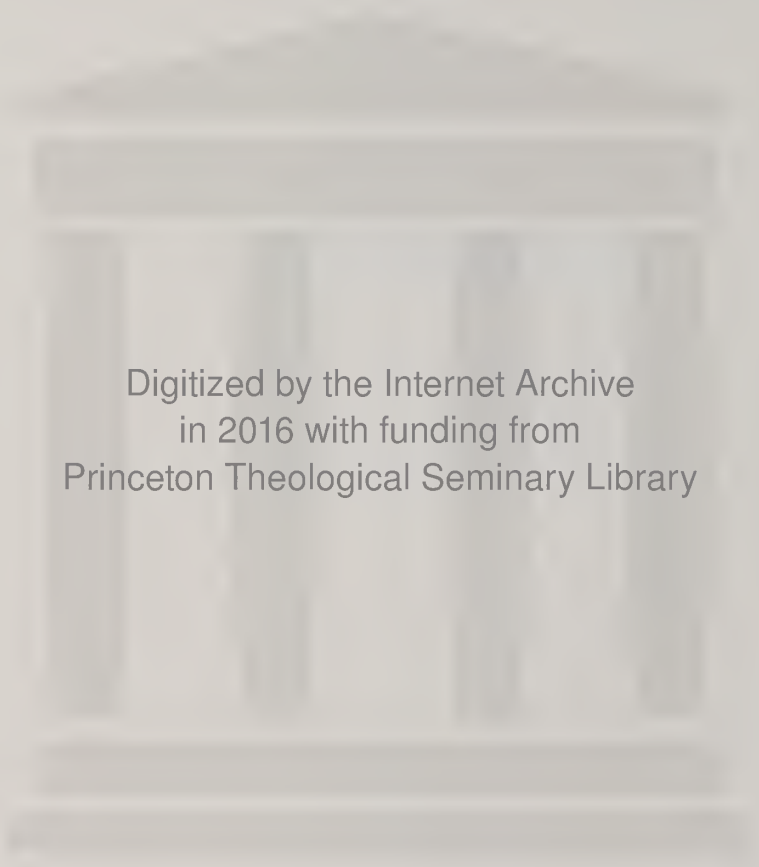


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THE PRINCETON SEMINARY BULLETIN

VOLUME XXIV NUMBER 1 NEW SERIES 2003

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A Question of Authority

THOMAS W. GILLESPIE

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E-Z Pass

NANCY LAMMERS GROSS

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A Question of Authority

by THOMAS W. GILLESPIE

Matthew 21:23-27

President Thomas W. Gillespie of Princeton Theological Seminary delivered this Convocation Address in Miller Chapel on September 17, 2002.

SOONER OR LATER every student of theology must confront the question of authority. Both the modern project and its postmodern critics require us to do so. For since Immanuel Kant formulated the principle that the enlightened are those who think for themselves, the traditional theological notions of authority—biblical, ecclesial, and ministerial—have become suspect. As the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer put it in his magnum opus *Truth and Method*, “It is the general tendency of the enlightenment not to accept any authority and to decide everything before the judgment seat of reason.”¹ Which simply means, of course, that reason became the sole authority in matters of truth, including those having to do with faith and practice. As such, it trumped the claims of a privileged epistemological status for the Bible, the Church, and its ordained ministry.

More recently, the postmodern mentality has subjected that Enlightenment vision of a universal reason, common to all people at all times in all places, to a hermeneutics of suspicion. The verdict is that human rationality is highly conditioned and differentiated by cultural, historical, and social factors, to say nothing of gender, race, and ethnicity. Nonetheless, this criticism has not removed the intellectual embargo on grounding the truth claims of faith simply in the witness of the Christian Scriptures, or the tradition of their interpretation represented by our respective communions, or the personal persuasiveness of those church leaders who were instrumental in bringing us to faith and forming us in it. For what the modern project rejected as unwarranted *authorities* are also rejected in postmodernity as unjustified *foundations*. Under either rubric, however, the issue remains the same and the question of what, if anything, counts as authority in theological inquiry requires of us an answer.

I.

We need to recognize that authority was questionable long before either modernity or postmodernity. In point of fact, the question is deeply rooted in the New Testament itself. Consider the treatment it receives in the Gospel of Matthew. The Greek term for authority (*exousia*) surfaces in a variety of

¹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), 241.

contexts from the beginning to the end of the First Gospel. At the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, for example, Matthew records that "the crowds were astounded at Jesus' teaching, for he taught them as one having *exousia*, and not as their scribes" (7:28f.). Jesus exercised *didactic* authority. In the story of the paralytic, whom friends brought to Jesus for healing, we are told that he first declared the man's sins forgiven. When the scribes present called this blasphemy, Jesus asked them, "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and walk?' But so that you may know that the Son of Man has *exousia* on earth to forgive sins," he then said to the paralytic, "Stand up, take your bed and go to your home" (9:2-8). When the man did just that, it demonstrated that Jesus exercised *therapeutic* authority, suggesting that in so doing he also mediated *priestly* authority.

The point about healing is reiterated later in Matthew's narrative when he records the commissioning of the twelve disciples. With these programmatic words they become apostles:

Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them *exousia* over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness (10:1).

So the exercise of *therapeutic* authority characterized not only the ministry of Jesus but, by his appointment, that of his disciples as well.

Whether the same may be said of Jesus' priestly authority depends on how you interpret Matthew's version of Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah at Caesarea Philippi, especially the promise to Peter that in the building of "my church," "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (16:19). New Testament professor David Hill comments that the authority to "bind" and "loose" may refer to teaching or discipline, "including the [sacerdotal] right to condemn or acquit." "Both interpretations amount to much the same thing in the end," he concludes.²

It is not surprising then that Matthew concludes his Gospel with the audacious claim of the risen Jesus, "All *exousia* in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (28:18). It is this claim that undergirds the so-called Great Commission:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age (28:19-20).

² David Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Greenwood, S.C.: Attic Press, 1975), 262.

Jesus, according to Matthew, claims *universal* authority for the Church's apostolic mission.

But all of this intensifies the question put to Jesus by the chief priests and the elders of the people in the temple the morning after he cleansed it of the money changers and merchants. "By what authority are you doing these things," they demanded to know, "and who gave you this authority?" (21:23). What they, together with Matthew, understood by *authority* is attested by the incident in which a centurion comes to Jesus and implores him to heal his servant who is "lying at home paralyzed, in terrible distress" (8:5-13). When Jesus agrees to come and cure the man, the centurion demurs:

Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and the slave does it.

This Roman officer clearly understands the meaning of authority in a military context. Just issue the order and it will be done. My Marine Corps "boot camp" drill Sergeant had the same view. "When I say, 'Jump,'" he exclaimed, "you say, 'How high, Sir?' *on the way up*."

This exchange between the centurion and Jesus tells us two important things about the concept of *authority*. One is that authority is the exercise of effective *power*. The centurion, himself "a man under authority," knew that authority entails the power to exercise dominion. "Only say the word," he urges Jesus, "and my servant will be healed." No need for Jesus to come to his home, for he is a man of authority who can impose his will upon the servant's paralysis, even from a distance, merely by uttering the command.

That is why Matthew characteristically speaks of Jesus' ministry in terms of "deeds of power" (11:20; 13:54). And make no mistake about it, there is no authority without effective power. The point is scored by the story of the two seventeenth-century Englishmen who were arguing the issue of who had the greater authority, the bishop or the magistrate. "Oh," said the one, "'tis the bishop who has the greater authority, for the bishop can say 'Ye be damned,' while the magistrate can only say, 'Ye be hanged.'" "Aye," replied the other, "but when the magistrate says 'Ye be hanged,' ye *are* hanged."

Yet, there is more to authority than power. The exchange between the centurion and Jesus also tells us that authority is, as Max Weber emphasized, the *legitimate* exercise of effective power. This is what distinguishes power from mere *force*. The centurion was an officer of the Roman army and, as such, received and gave orders in a chain of command that was legitimated by

the government, in this case the Emperor. So, in point of fact, he speaks to Jesus metaphorically. He perceives in Jesus someone who, like himself, exercises a legitimate and effective power, but a power which transcends that of a Roman army officer and is legitimated by a source greater than the Roman Emperor. Put otherwise, he recognizes in Jesus someone who exercises *transcendent* power, both effectively and legitimately, as an agent of another order, perhaps that order which Jesus himself identifies in the First Gospel as "the kingdom of heaven."

That, of course, is precisely the point of the question addressed to Jesus by the chief priests and the elders of the people, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" The issue was not whether Jesus exercised effective power in his ministry. That was quite evident. The issue was the *source* of that power and thus its *legitimacy*. Rumor had it that Herod the tetrarch attributed the power of Jesus to John the Baptist *redivivus*. For Matthew records:

At that time Herod the ruler heard reports about Jesus; and he said to his servants, 'This is John the Baptist; he has been raised from the dead, and for this reason these powers are at work in him' (14:1-2).

A more sinister explanation was provided by the Pharisees, who attributed the power exercised by Jesus to a demonic source. You may recall the story Matthew tells about Jesus healing a blind mute, restoring both his sight and his hearing. The crowds, in their amazement, ask, "Can this be the Son of David?" But the Pharisees dismiss the question by claiming, "It is only by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons, that this fellow casts out the demons." In the exchange that follows, Jesus makes three points: (1) He observes that every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, (2) he claims that no one plunders the house of a strong man without first overpowering the strong man, and (3) he explains that "if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you" (12:22-30).

Characteristically, Jesus made his claims indirectly, obliquely, often by way of counter questions as here in our text. He answers the question of the chief priests and the elders of the people about the source of his authority, about the legitimacy of his effective power, by saying to them:

I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?

His question, of course, puts them between the proverbial rock and a hard place, for it focuses the issue and limits the possible answers.

If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet. So they answered Jesus, 'We do not know.' And he said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things' (21:25-27).

Jesus refuses to answer them, you see, not because he is ignorant of the answer, as they claim to be, but because he recognizes that the issue of authority is not simply one of *identifying* its source but ultimately of *submitting* to it. And therein lies the rub, not only with the chief priests and the elders of the people but with modernity and postmodernity as well.

II.

For all of their differences, modernism and postmodernism share a common dogma which Matthew's formulation of the question of authority challenges. That dogma is what J. A. Burrow identifies as "the sovereignty of an autonomous self." In his recent critical review of modern European thought, published under the title of *The Crisis of Reason*, this Oxford professor argues that "the moral core" of our modern world is "the absolute claim of individual autonomy, limited only by the equivalent claims of others."³ Matthew's notion of *submission* to an authority other than the self violates this cultural moral core and is thereby anathematized.

Burrow notes, however, that even within the time frame of his investigation (1848-1914), this modern, autonomous, rational, self-conscious individual was viewed by many as "hollow at the core," with his (and increasingly also her) coveted freedom resulting in "an emptiness or absence of identity."⁴ Thus in a chapter devoted to "The Illusive Self," he recounts how belief in the sovereignty of the autonomous self led to "a baffled, never-ending search for the true, inner self," especially in Russian literature where the liberated self became "a tormenting question mark."⁵

Typical was Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*. Published in 1864, it introduced themes later to re-emerge in the existentialism of the twentieth century and, one might add, in postmodernism as well. It is the story of a petty official who comes into an inheritance and retires early to live as a recluse and drown himself in introspection. Burrow summarizes the results of this unending exercise tersely, "The only thought he seems unequivocally to

³ J. W. Burrow, *The Crisis of Reason: European Thought, 1848-1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 147.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xiii.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 148.

endorse is that there is no valid ground for anything one does or apparently is.”⁶ Had Dostoevsky completed the second part of this work, which he intended to place in an overtly Christian context, Burrow speculates that it would have become clear that the world of the Underground Man is a world without God and therefore hell, and that human freedom without God is “a raw will grounded in nothing, a bottomless abyss of self-consciousness.”⁷

This anxiety over the dogma of the sovereign self was not limited to either Russia or the nineteenth century, however. At the conclusion of the twentieth, Adam Seligman addresses this issue in his volume, *The Modern Wager*. He writes:

Most broadly put, this modern idea of the self is an autonomous, atomistic, and self-regulating moral agent endowed with rights. And relations between selves are seen in terms of an exchange based on the mutual interests of the contracting parties.⁸

From this perspective the notion of submitting to any authority external to the self is viewed as heteronomy, the very opposite of autonomy, and by definition the betrayal of individual freedom.

Seligman’s book, subtitled *Authority, the Self and Transcendence*, is in fact written to challenge this modern prejudice against authority. He argues that the wager made by Western intellectuals since the Enlightenment is that the human self and community can be sustained by relating the self not to the transcendent (God) but merely to the transcendental (Reason). The gamble, according to this Jewish professor of religion at Boston University, has failed on both counts.

In his effort to rescue authority from the abuse of its cultured despisers, Seligman calls upon Max Weber’s notion of the “inner justification” of dominion. Whereas sheer force coerces submission, authority as the effective exercise of *legitimate* power appeals to the self on three grounds. These Weber identified as the *affectual*, the *value-rational*, and the *religious*. The first results from emotional surrender to the authority, the second from belief in the absolute validity of the ethical values represented by the authority, and the third from the belief that salvation depends upon the power of the authority.

Let me suggest that all three of these appeals were at work in the authority exercised by Jesus. The power unto salvation was evident in his healing

⁶ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁸ Adam B. Seligman, *Modernity’s Wager: Authority, the Self and Transcendence* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), 6.

ministry. For those who experienced or witnessed it, there was an inclination to trust in his teaching. In turn, this led, for many, to the “emotional surrender” that characterized the personal commitment of the disciples to him. And let me further suggest that Weber’s “inner justification” of dominion provides a clue to how we ourselves might understand and speak to others of submission to God’s authority in the midst of a culture (and a Church?) engaged in the idolatry of the autonomous self of modernity, or, as in postmodernism, the desperation of the amorphous self.

III.

Consider the matter of *biblical authority*. This is a big issue today in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The problem is that the appeal to the authority of Scripture made by some is heard by others as a heteronomous effort to coerce their views on a variety of topics. As such it turns them off. My suspicion is that this might not be the case if today’s church members (and today’s pastors?) were people deeply nurtured by the devotional reading of the Bible. In our Reformed tradition, for example, we once viewed Bible reading as a “means of grace,” meaning as a medium of God’s redeeming love to those who read the witness of the Scriptures to Jesus Christ in faith.

My father read the Bible that way. When he died in 1973, I found among his personal possessions a dog-eared copy of his New Testament that gave evidence of being “read, marked, and inwardly digested.” Now he never heard of the “four source hypothesis” that alleges to solve “the Synoptic problem.” And he probably believed to the end that Paul wrote Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians—and the Pastorals to boot. But all of that is irrelevant to my point, which is that he experienced God’s continuing grace toward him as he read the Scriptures in their central witness to Jesus Christ, in whom he believed and unto whom he lived and died. For my father, the authority of Scripture was not so much a theological dogma as it was an experience of the transforming and sustaining power of the Spirit that came to him daily through reading the Bible.

Let me be so bold as to suggest that seminarians, even seminary professors, can profit from such a spiritual discipline. Tonight you entering juniors, at least many of you, are on the threshold of your introduction to the scholarly disciplines associated with the historical-critical study of the Scriptures. You will learn about the archeology of the texts, their origins in oral tradition, and their prehistory in a variety of written rescensions. You will be introduced to the work of editors and redactors and learn how to recognize a seam. You will encounter literary, redactional, social, and reader-response criticism. Above

all, you will enter into the dark cave of hermeneutics from which no one emerges unchanged. And all of this, believe it or not, is not only important but crucial for your theological education. For it should enhance your reading of the Bible, and it will, if at the same time that you are trying to solve its problems, you continue to read it in terms of its central message.

I am not suggesting that this will resolve all the differences that surface in biblical interpretation, but I am contending that an appeal to the authority of Scripture would be heard differently if we all were more familiar with it as a means of grace, as a medium of theological, moral, and spiritual formation and thus—in all of its rich complexity—as a gift from God worthy of our respect and devotion. When it nurtures your soul, you will experience its saving authority. And that will encourage you to trust its teaching, which, in turn, will deepen your affection for the One who is the Source of that redemptive power.

The same is true of our proclamation of the gospel. Where is the recognized authority of our preaching? Surely we now know that in an increasingly post-Christian world we who are ordained ministers are not viewed as authority figures because the title *Reverend* prefixes our names or because we don Geneva gowns, with or without collars and stoles, and mount pulpits that once upon a time put us seven steps above reproach. The simple truth is that in preaching we stand before our congregations naked of any authority save that of the message itself. In fact, we are the most vulnerable of all clergy types. Someone has said that the difference between Jewish rabbis, Catholic priests, and Protestant ministers is this. The rabbi declares, "It is written in the Law of Moses." The priest avers, "The Church teaches." The minister says, "It seems to me."

In our postmodern world, in which no absolutes are recognized, no meta-narratives allowed, and all points of view determined by one's point of viewing, the Protestant minister has it right, of course. "It seems to me" is all we can say. But the point is that even "it seems to me" can be the medium of God's redemptive power when it is an authentic, faithful, and convictional witness to Jesus Christ, to whom has been given "all authority in heaven and on earth."

Thus, if it is the case, as Calvin held, that Christ comes to us "clothed in his gospel," and if Melancthon was on to something when he said that "to know Christ is to know his benefits," then the preaching that attests to Jesus as the mediator of the effective power of God at work for our salvation will be legitimated in the eyes and in the experience of those who become and remain the recipients of this grace. You do not have to be a rocket scientist to recognize that the blind mute restored to sight and sound by Jesus would

not have had the same problem with the question of the source of Jesus' authority as did the chief priests and the elders of the people. For he experienced that authority not as a coercive force, but as a liberating power. The exercised authority of Jesus did not destroy his freedom. It liberated him from his captivity to a sightless and soundless existence.

The point is that people like him even today are those who know through Jesus the authority of God as an effective redeeming power. They are, for that reason, those most likely to recognize the authority of the Scriptures that attest to Jesus. For they are people who by faith ground the self—their own self—neither in themselves nor in a transcendental reason, nor in an unending communal conversation, but in the transcendent God, the One whose power is indeed the source of our salvation, whose Word is recognized as a sure and certain guide to fullness of life, and whose love elicits our affection and thus our submission.

The bottom line is that authority, the legitimate and effective power of God unto salvation, is not a burden to be borne but a gift to be enjoyed. Did you notice how Matthew stresses its gift character? The priests and the elders ask, "Who *gave* you this authority?" Jesus summoned his disciples and "*gave* them authority" for ministry. And his resurrection words on the mountain were, "All authority in heaven and earth has been *given* to me." Apart from that divine *giving*, the Church has no authority in itself, the Bible has no authority in itself, and we who seek to serve as ministers of Jesus Christ have no authority in ourselves. The gift is from God and it is manifested in its transforming power.

Perhaps that is why the questions of authority as posed by Matthew—both the question to Jesus and the question of Jesus—go unanswered in his Gospel. They are left for us to answer for ourselves—and for our ministry.

E-ZPass

by NANCY LAMMERS GROSS

Nancy Lammers Gross, Associate Professor of Speech Communication in Ministry, and author of If You Cannot Preach Like Paul (2002), preached this sermon at the opening communion service in Miller Chapel on September 18, 2002.

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed;
perplexed, but not driven to despair;
persecuted, but not forsaken;
struck down, but not destroyed.

II Corinthians 4:7-17

APPARENTLY, PAUL DID not conduct his apostolic journeys in the *E-ZPass* lane.

For those of you new to the Garden State, you need to understand that we don't have freeways. We have a Turnpike and a Parkway. And you have to pay to use them. *E-ZPass* lanes on the New Jersey Turnpike and the Garden State Parkway let you ease through toll booths without stopping, and your fee is levied against a declining balance account. *E-ZPass* lanes aren't exactly easy, but they are easier than standing in line to collect a ticket when you get on the Turnpike, so that you can stand in line to pay the fee to get off the turnpike. *E-ZPass* lanes are easier than stopping every few miles to toss \$.25 or \$.35 (you never know until the last moment) into a toll machine.

I'm sure there are real tangible financial reasons locked up in tax structures and interstate transportation realities that lead to the need for these ubiquitous fees. I'm sure the fees have to do with maintaining our beautiful Garden State highways—more linear miles of highway and more cars per capita than any other state in the nation. But it sure seems like we pay the fee in order to pay the person who takes our fee.

E-ZPass lanes are a good idea. We'd all like an *E-ZPass* lane. It is particularly needful in New Jersey where people and horses and wagons long preceded planning. In New Jersey you have to go right in order to go left, you must often go north in order to go south. For years, until just recently, the local entrance to Interstate 95 south was also labeled 295 north. It's hard to envision how traveling in one direction on one stretch of highway can be traveling both south and north at the same time, but in New Jersey you could do just that.

Until recently U.S. Route 18, which cuts east-west directly across north-south route 1 in New Brunswick, was an east-west route. And it traveled east-west, at least as far east and as far west as I ever took it. But recently I

had occasion to be heading toward Route 18 and was totally disoriented to discover that Route 18 had been changed to north-south.

When I had to make a quick decision as to whether to travel north or south on this east-west route, I relied on my twenty years of New Jersey driving and my slowly developing intuition as to what twisted logic would prevail in such a scenario. I'm almost chagrined to report that this Californian chose correctly.

Besides the fact that the administration of *E-ZPass* lanes have been fraught with problems since their inception, *E-ZPass* lanes are a great idea. And who wouldn't want an *E-ZPass* lane through life? Let those other poor clowns sit in lines miles long when the Turnpike and Parkway become parking lots. Let those others be *afflicted* with fumes; *perplexed* by microscopic fee schedules you can't possibly read in the car; *persecuted* by traffic circles where if you get in you often can't get out; and *struck down* by 18 wheelers traveling by our side on our little wagon paths! We'll take the *E-ZPass* lanes!

Who wouldn't want an *E-ZPass* lane through seminary? No dark nights of the soul; no strenuous mental gymnastics pondering a complex philosophical argument; congenial consensus with one another while never taking our differences *too* seriously; no squabbles with the Registrar's office to ever hang you up; every course you want when you want it is available; and upon entrance you are affirmed and celebrated for your natural speaking abilities so you never have to take Speech and Communications 101-102!

An *E-ZPass* lane through seminary would be a sort of ATM.Div.! Just pop in your time card, take classes from the people who see things the way you do, don't let seminary change you too much, and ordination awaits you on the other end.

Sounds great, sort of. The problem is, as you know, life isn't like that. *E-ZPass* lanes are not consistent with the world of the gospel. The world of the gospel that Paul describes, the authentic Christian life, is marked by human suffering and frailty.

Apparently Paul did not travel the *E-ZPass* lanes. Slandered, reviled, hungry, thirsty and homeless, Paul knew what it meant to be afflicted. At the end of human resources, tried and jailed, Paul knew what it meant to be perplexed. Hated by most religious and civic authorities, Paul knew what it meant to be persecuted. Hunted down from Antioch and Iconium to Lystra, stoned and beaten and left for dead, Paul knew what it meant to be struck down.

There was no *E-ZPass* for Paul. There was no *E-ZPass* for other apostles for whom Paul speaks. Paul isn't even responding here to a desire by the Corinthian Christians for an *E-ZPass*.

There are other places in the Corinthian correspondence where Paul mocks his readers that *they* are wise, *they* are eloquent, *they* are strong. And later in the correspondence Paul does take a walk through the "hurt museum." To those who boasted of their qualifications, Paul responds, "OK, I'll boast. I've worked harder, had far more imprisonments, countless floggings—I've often been near death. I've received 40 lashes minus one five times! Three times beaten with rods, shipwrecked, and left adrift at sea, dangers from rivers, dangers from bandits, dangers from my own people, hungry, cold, naked . . ." and he goes on!

Paul wasn't so saintly that he didn't resort sometimes to mocking or taking that boastful walk through the hurt museum. But here, in II Cor. 4, Paul is doing neither. Rather, Paul describes the authentic Christian life that is manifested in the world of the Gospel. Neither arrogant, nor boastful, with no apparent design to shame, Paul is simply describing the way things are. He *is* singled out for suffering, and he *does* expect to die before Christ returns.

The apostles *do* suffer more than do those to whom Paul writes. There is a sense in which Paul is a lightening rod for the abuse of the authorities. Paul was a threat to the status quo, *even* in his weakness. Paul was a power with whom to contend, *in spite* of his weakness, *especially* in his weakness . . . because Paul manifested the profound pattern of the Christian life—crucifixion and resurrection.

Death does pursue Paul; death is at work in Paul. He is simply describing the way things are. But death is also at work in every believer as we die to all that is old and sinful and are reformed into the likeness of Christ. Death is at work in Paul, and Paul expects to die before Christ returns; *but he also expects that those whom his ministry serves will live into Christ's return.*

The point of describing the way things are is to demonstrate the radical power of the Gospel in light of human weakness. The point of describing the way things are is to draw the contrast between the unsurpassable power of God and the fragility of human life to whom God has entrusted this Gospel. We are not to seek suffering. We do not need to seek suffering. Suffering will find most of us without going looking for it.

To live the authentic Christian life is to live the pattern of crucifixion and resurrection. We can try to avoid it. We can look for the easy way. But where there is no crucifixion there can be no resurrection. Where there is no death of Jesus there can be no new life. Where there is no willingness to give up an old familiar way of thinking there can be no new learning.

We can try to ignore the struggle, we can try to forget what it has cost us in the past or what it has cost someone we love, or what it has cost someone we admire, we can try to deny the pain, deny that it hurts to have our way of

thinking, our way of believing, our way of worshipping—to have it all challenged. We can try to forget what it has cost our ancestors in the faith, but it doesn't change the reality of the pattern of Christian life—crucifixion and resurrection.

The mother-daughter book club my twelve year old and I belong to recently read a fictional story by Lois Lowry entitled *The Giver*. *The Giver* is about a community who decided that the pain and heartache of the human struggle, the intense and often conflicted feelings of the daily walk, the awkward differences in the diversity of the human community—all of this was simply not worth the struggle and the dis-ease. So they developed a community of sameness.

Feelings were ritualistically shared in order to be minimized and denied; pre-adolescent “stirrings” that persisted throughout adult life until one became “an old” were erased with a daily pill; adult occupations were assigned ceremoniously at age twelve by a committee of elders; comfort objects with odd names like “bear,” “elephant,” and “hippo” were given at birth and given up when one became a “Nine,” that is, nine years old. There were no animals in the community of sameness so the comfort objects were simply soft funny-shaped things with peculiar names.

“Threes” were taught the acquisition of correct language; “Eights” were given their first coats with buttons in front (until then the buttons were in back in order to teach cooperation); “Nines” received their bicycles, the community's only form of transportation; “Tens” had their hair cut and the females removed their hair ribbons.

In the community of sameness only selected women became the birth mothers who actually bore the community's children—three and no more; and a couple whose marital union was approved by the elders applied for and received no more than two children—one male child and one female child.

Communal memory of life before sameness was erased, except in the life of one person, the Receiver. The Receiver held the communal memory of joy and sorrow, pain and pleasure, music and color. When the Receiver became old a child was chosen to become the new Receiver of the memory, and the old Receiver became the Giver.

In the community of sameness there were no risks to be taken, no hurdles to overcome, no pain to be endured. There was virtually no sadness or guilt or remorse, because there was no moral compass, except for the need to follow very explicit rules. If there was a third infraction of the rules, one was simply “released” from the community, a euphemism, presumably, either for being exiled or for being killed—it is never made clear.

In many ways, life in the community of sameness achieves the kind of ethic in living that we want to achieve. Everyone is treated fairly and courteously; no one is privileged over another; justice prevails; apologies for minor infractions are routinely given and automatically received, everyone's needs are tended to. No one goes hungry; everyone has a job that contributes to life in the community. There is no angst, no suffering, no memory, no change, no transformation, and no meaning.

And then, one year, a new Twelve is chosen to be the new Receiver—the new Receiver of communal memory, the one in whom all pain and knowledge, all joy and ecstasy would be contained. And this Twelve, Jonas, begins to realize, as he receives the communal memories of war and love, of color and seasons, of sunshine and sunburn, that his community has not been living authentically.

No one makes choices, he realizes. No one is ever wronged. Life is never chaotic. No one is ever loved, and once he has received the memory of love, he wants to be loved, he *yearns* to be loved. But love is such an imprecise word, it is not used in the community of sameness. And life is as far from authentic as east is from west.

In the end, Jonas sacrifices himself so that the *community* may receive the memory of what it means to truly live. In a sense, the community must come to realize that the world of sameness is a denial of everything human. It must hold its own memories, suffer its own losses, learn the true tragedy and unspeakable joy of what it means to love.

The apostle Paul was not the sole sufferer. He alone did not hold the communal memory. He isn't preaching about his suffering, there is no sense of martyrdom behind his words. He does point to the astonishing reality that God chose the path of humility and weakness in order to manifest the unsearchable wisdom and unimaginable power of God.

He does point to the astonishing reality that to be afflicted *but not crushed*, perplexed *but not driven to despair*, persecuted *but not forsaken*, struck down *but not destroyed* is nothing other than a testimony that the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ comes from God alone.

The power of the gospel does not originate with us; it is not improved upon by our mental gymnastics; it is not more or less efficacious depending on the quality of our piety. Let it be made clear that the extraordinary power of God found in the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ belongs to God alone.

Paul knows that in the economy of God's grace the suffering of one on behalf of the Gospel, makes the whole people stronger—grace and knowledge and thanksgiving increase to the glory of God. What greater testimony

is there to the power of God than that its vessel, made not of iron, or silver or gold or granite, is the most fragile imaginable, and yet never breaks?

God has chosen to harbor this treasure, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ in us, clay pots. The pattern of authentic Christian living, the pattern of crucifixion and resurrection is unavoidable because the power and wisdom of God are manifest in fragile humanity, weak and altogether too often dim-witted folks like you and me.

The memory we hold, the communal memory of God's faithfulness and the suffering of the saints, the witness of the church through the ages, the communal memory we hold is focused in the table. We come to the table and we remember, over and over again, that Jesus took bread, and when he had blessed it he broke it and gave it to his disciples saying "Take and eat. This is my body which is for you." But there is more than memory when we come to the table. We are fed. Grace abounds. Christ is truly present. And we testify to the world that authentic human life is found in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

E-ZPass? No thank you.

Reorientation: Homiletics as Theologically Authorized Rhetoric

by JAMES F. KAY

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I. SACRED RHETORIC

HOMILETICS IN THE American classroom began in Princeton.¹ John Witherspoon (1723-1794) brought with him to Princeton what is sometimes called "the New Rhetoric" of the Scottish Enlightenment, and he placed it at the curricular center of the college.² Beginning in 1768, and continuing until his death, Witherspoon lectured annually on "eloquence," devoting one lecture of the sixteen to that of the pulpit.³ Since their posthumous publication in 1801, these "Lectures on Eloquence" have become recognized as "the first American rhetorical treatise."⁴ In this way, as in others, Witherspoon's presidency at Princeton signaled the advent of the Scottish Enlightenment on these shores. The emphasis he placed on rhetorical education proved momentous not only for the American revolution and the early republic, but also for homiletics.

As with the old rhetoric, derived ultimately from Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, the new rhetoric of the eighteenth century also concerned itself with the speaker, the audience, and the speech, together with its occasion and

¹ The "first book on the theory of preaching produced in this country" was Cotton Mather's (1663-1728) *Manuductio ad ministerium, directions for a candidate for the ministry* (Boston: Printed for Thomas Hancock, 1726), which had "only a brief section on preaching." See *Baker's Dictionary of Practical Theology*, under "The History of Homiletics," by Vernon L. Stanfield. More recent historiography would no doubt wish to investigate the state of homiletics in New France, New Spain, and the Russian Empire in those regions now part of the United States. The significance of Witherspoon was his placing homiletical theory into an explicitly rhetorical framework as an integral component of regular classroom instruction. This proved decisive for the subsequent development of homiletics as an academic field in the United States.

² Wilbur Samuel Howell, "The New Rhetoric (1646-1800)," in *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 440-691. On Witherspoon's educational innovations, see Thomas Miller, preface to *The Selected Writings of John Witherspoon*, Landmarks in Rhetoric and Public Address (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), 19-24.

³ "Lectures on Eloquence," in *The Selected Writings of John Witherspoon*, 231-318. For lecture fourteen on pulpit eloquence, see 295-300.

⁴ Miller, preface to *The Selected Writings of John Witherspoon*, vii. Following their initial publication in Witherspoon's collected *Works*, his "Lectures on Eloquence" appeared in a separate edition in 1810 with his "Lectures on Moral Philosophy."

purpose. But as Nan Johnson has noted, what made this rhetoric "new," was its adoption of the faculty psychology of John Locke (1632-1704), its extension of rhetoric to all forms of discourse, including written, and its recognition of "taste," or innate sense of beauty, on style, standards of criticism, and moral formation.⁵ This new rhetoric, imported to Princeton, was most prominently associated with two of Witherspoon's Scottish contemporaries and fellow ministers of the Kirk, George Campbell (1719-1796) and Hugh Blair (1718-1800). George Campbell was Principal of Marischal College, Aberdeen, and taught systematic theology and pulpit eloquence. Hugh Blair was minister of St. Giles and the first Regius Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in Edinburgh.⁶

Without exception, these representatives of the Scottish Enlightenment all reflected on the practice of preaching in light of rhetorical theory. Indeed, beginning with Witherspoon, homiletics in America has generally operated within a rhetorical, rather than a theological, frame of reference. John Hoshor reports that "the application of the principles of rhetoric to the art of preaching may be said to have been completed by the end of the [nineteenth] century."⁷ John A. Broadus (1827-1895) decisively defined homiletics for theological education when he wrote in 1870 that "homiletics may be called a branch of rhetoric, or a kindred art," and "we must regard homiletics as rhetoric applied to this particular kind of speaking," that is, preaching.⁸ Broadus' formulation of homiletics as a branch of rhetoric directly derives from the new rhetoric of Witherspoon, Blair, and Campbell. For these rhetoricians, "pulpit eloquence" is a particular instance of that "eloquence"

⁵ Nan Johnson, *Nineteenth-Century Rhetoric in North America* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), 50-52, and emending Howell to include Richard Whately's (1787-1863) contributions within those of "the New Rhetoric." Cf. Howell's distinctions between the "old" and "new" rhetoric in *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric*, 441-447.

⁶ For a discussion of Campbell and Blair see Howell, *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric*, 577-612 and 647-671, respectively. See also, Lloyd F. Bizer, "Editor's Introduction," in George Campbell, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), vii-li.

⁷ John P. Hoshor, "American Contributions to Rhetorical Theory and Homiletics," in *History of Speech Education in America: Background Studies*, ed. Karl R. Wallace (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1954), 149. See also James F. Kay, "'Pulpit Eloquence' and Its Pauline Strictures: The Triumph of Rhetoric in Modern Homiletical Theory," *Papers of the Annual Meeting, Academy of Homiletics*, Dallas, Texas, 2000, 173-184, and *The Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching*, under "Homiletics and Preaching in North America," by Don Wardlaw.

⁸ John A. Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, ed. Edwin Charles Dargan (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1898), 16. Cf. the formulation of Alexandre Vinet (1797-1847), "Rhetoric is the genus, Homiletics the species." A. Vinet, *Homiletics; or, The Theory of Preaching*, 2nd ed., trans. and ed. Thomas H. Skinner (New York: Ivison and Phinney, 1854), 22.

also found in forensic oratory and deliberative discourse. Indeed, the judicial bar, the legislative chamber, and the Christian pulpit are the three great modern arenas of eloquence. Each of these contexts shapes its speeches to its distinctive subjects and particular ends. Homiletics, therefore, is a "species" of rhetoric, eloquence adapted for use in the pulpit.⁹

In his magisterial *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776), George Campbell, paraphrasing Quintilian, writes, "The word *eloquence* in its greatest latitude denotes, 'That art or talent by which the discourse is adapted to its end.'" ¹⁰ Campbell further specifies the aims or ends of public speaking; namely, to "enlighten the understanding," to "please the imagination," to "move the passions," or to "influence the will."¹¹ What distinguishes pulpit eloquence from that of the courtroom or the legislative chamber is not these aims common to eloquence in general, but, rather, its subject for presentation.¹² The subject of a given sermon is derived from theology whose "doctrines of religion" furnish preaching with content, always shaped for the listeners without whom there is no discourse.¹³ Therefore, pulpit eloquence, mindful of its audience, packages and delivers Christian doctrine.¹⁴

⁹ Campbell, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 98-99. See also Witherspoon, "Lectures on Eloquence," 295-309; and, Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, (1819; reprint, with an introduction by Charlotte Downey, American Linguistics 1700-1900, Delmar, New York: Scholars' Facsimiles and Pamphlets, 1993), 255-292. Blair's *Lectures* were first published in 1783.

¹⁰ Campbell, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 1, noting Quintilian: "Dicere secundum virtutem orationis." Italics original. See also George Campbell, *Lectures on Systematic Theology and Pulpit Eloquence*. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, Strand, 1807, 350. These lectures were first given in 1772-1773 in Aberdeen. Cf. Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, 234: "To be eloquent, is to speak to the purpose. For the best definition which, I think, can be given of eloquence, is the art of speaking in such a manner as to attain the end for which we speak."

¹¹ Campbell, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 1, noting "Tully," i.e., Marcus Tullius Cicero: "Optimus est orator qui dicendo animos audientium et docet, et delectat, et permovet." Campbell holds that these distinct purposes can occur together, but one should be preeminent in a discourse. See also Campbell, *Lectures on Systematic Theology and Pulpit Eloquence*, 350.

¹² This distinction between the subject of a discourse and its aim or end is a commonplace. See Campbell, *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 104-112; and, Witherspoon, "Lectures on Eloquence," 247-48, 290-295.

¹³ Campbell, *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 104-106. See also Campbell, *Lectures on Systematic Theology and Pulpit Eloquence*, 260. Since the canonical scriptures are "the great rule of faith and practice," every Christian doctrine must have "its foundations in holy writ." 409.

¹⁴ Campbell, *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 104-106. As Campbell indicates elsewhere, he does not favor preaching dogmatic theology, as such. Rather, as befits a rhetorician of his time, he sees the ultimate end of every doctrine "in the performance of duty, or as a motive to it." The revelation of the truths of the gospel "was not given to gratify our curiosity, but to regulate our lives." Campbell, *Lectures on Systematic Theology and Pulpit Eloquence*, 467-468.

But to what end? Campbell declares, "The primary intention of preaching is the reformation of mankind."¹⁵ The goal of preaching is to effect a "permanent" change in the listeners at the level of motivation, "to persuade them, for the love of God, to be wise, and just, and good[.]"¹⁶ Hugh Blair will later put it more succinctly, "The end of all preaching is, to persuade men to become good. Every sermon, therefore, should be a persuasive oration."¹⁷ Since this is the case, ethos considerations are vital. "The preacher himself," Blair tells us, "in order to be successful, must be a good man."¹⁸ Witherspoon, with more Evangelical piety than Blair's Moderatism would likely allow, tells his Princeton students "that one devoted to the service of the gospel should be *really, visibly, and eminently* holy."¹⁹ Nothing less will do if preaching is persuasion on behalf of moral reformation.

Nevertheless, even in this confident Age of Reason—and Rhetoric, doubts did surface about preaching as eloquence. George Campbell himself admits that if the aim is to "persuade him that stole to steal no more, the sensualist to forego his pleasures, and the miser his hoards, the insolent and haughty to become meek and humble, the vindictive forgiving, the cruel and unfeeling merciful and humane," then the preacher "would need to be possessed of oratory superior to human."²⁰ In fact, achieving such repentance through preaching "seems to bid defiance to the strongest efforts of oratorical genius."²¹ Campbell further observes, citing both the Crusades against Islam and conflicts among Christians themselves, that eloquence has too often and too easily stirred up the hatred and intolerance to which human depravity

¹⁵ Campbell, *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 107, alluding to Titus 2:11-12. Cf. Campbell, *Lectures on Systematic Theology and Pulpit Eloquence*, 355-356: "The reformation of mankind is the great and ultimate end of the whole ministerial function, and especially of this particular branch, preaching or discoursing from the pulpit. But it is not necessary, that the ultimate end of the whole should be the immediate scope of every part."

¹⁶ Campbell, *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 108-109. Cf. Campbell, *Lectures on Systematic Theology and Pulpit Eloquence*, 522: "I acknowledge, that the whole of preaching either directly or indirectly points to persuasion."

¹⁷ Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, 282.

¹⁸ Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, 282. Cf. the dictum of Cato the Elder, "An orator . . . is a good man skilled at speaking [*vir bonus dicendi peritus*]." Cited by George A. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), III.

¹⁹ Witherspoon, *Lectures on Eloquence*, 297. Italics original. With more nuance, Campbell indicates "it is a matter of some consequence that, *in the opinion of those whom he addresseth*, he [the speaker] is both a wise and a good man." *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 99. My italics. With respect to the preacher, "there is little or no indulgence, in regard to his own failings, to be expected by the man who is professedly a sort of authorized censor, who hath it in charge to mark and reprehend the faults of others." *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 100.

²⁰ Campbell, *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 108. Campbell exclaims, "Happy the preacher whose sermons, by the blessing of Heaven, have been instrumental in producing even a few such instances!" 109.

²¹ Campbell, *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 111.

disposes us. In light of this sorry record, Campbell concedes that the positive role of eloquence in motivating goodness is "the almost impossibility."²²

A generation later, John Quincy Adams (1767-1848), lecturing at Harvard as the first Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory, confesses that classical rhetoric, when it comes to the pulpit, "entirely fails us."²³ He continues,

The eloquence of the pulpit is to the science of rhetoric what this western hemisphere is to that of geography. Aristotle and Quintilian [sic] are as incompetent to mark its boundaries, as Pausanias or Strabo to tell us the latitude of . . . Cape Horn. In exploring this new region, like Columbus on his first voyage to this continent, we find our magnet has deserted us. Our needle no longer points to the pole.²⁴

Though not a professional theologian, this Harvard rhetorician and future President of the United States, perceives that something new enters history with the advent of Christian preaching; something that makes it so unlike other forms of public address that rhetoric proves unreliable as the frame of reference. Rhetoric "entirely fails us." It no longer provides definitive guidance, insofar as preaching witnesses to what Karl Barth (1886-1968) would later call, "A new world, the world of God."²⁵

II. FROM THE WORDS TO THE WORD

"What is preaching?—not How does one *do* it? But How *can* one do it?"²⁶ To this question, occasioned by the cultural crisis of the First World War, Karl Barth brought an answer that literally changed the subject of homiletics. As reformulated by Barth, the subject of a sermon is nothing other than the subject matter of the Christian faith, namely, the Word of God, or God in the act and event of self-revelation. God is not primarily a doctrine or "subject of religion" on which preachers expound. Rather, God is the Subject

²² Campbell, *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 109-110.

²³ John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory*, 2 vols. (1810; reprint, American Linguistics, 1700-1900, Delmar, New York: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1997), 1:322.

²⁴ Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory*, 1:322. Having recognized the difficulties, Adams then retreats with all deliberate speed "to apply the principles and method of Aristotle, so far as they can be applied, to this more recent species of public speaking."

²⁵ Karl Barth, "The Strange New World within the Bible [1916]," in *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans. with a new foreword by Douglas Horton, Harper Torchbooks ed. (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1957), 34.

²⁶ Karl Barth, "The Need and Promise of Christian Preaching [1922]," in *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, 103. Italics slightly altered.

of a sermon; not simply as its topic, but as its Agent. Here is the Source of that "oratory superior to human," for which Campbell sought in vain, but which can never be the "possession" of the human preacher. The effectual orator in the pulpit is God. Only when God speaks is preaching real preaching, that is, proclamation of the Word of God.²⁷

Within this new theological framework, rhetorical considerations seemingly become mute or moot, for rhetoric cannot package or deliver the living God. Simply put, if the human words of a sermon are to become God's Word, then God must make them so. It is not in the preacher's power to speak God's Word, for the power of rhetoric is not the power of the Gospel.²⁸ The world crisis of 1914-1918—and beyond—made clear to Barth that everything human, including our rhetoric at its best, falls under the dominion of death. Preaching, as a rhetorical act, is powerless to bring either the world—or even its own words—to life. Preaching can only be undertaken because God has commanded us to preach the Word of cross through which God has promised to raise the dead, including our words. Preaching proceeds on the basis of this divine command and promise. But as "pulpit eloquence," preaching neither possesses the new creation nor has the power to deliver it, because death circumscribes all eloquence. For this reason, Barth's colleague and early collaborator, Eduard Thurneysen (1888-1978) declares, with a nod to Nietzsche, "The pulpit must be the grave of all human words . . ."; hence, the "first rule" of preaching: "*Keine Beredsamkeit!*" "*No eloquence!*"²⁹ Preaching begins where eloquence ends.

This revolution in preaching theory means that homiletics is no longer a species of rhetoric but a subfield of dogmatics. The frame of reference has shifted from rhetoric to theology. Ironically, Thurneysen's theological attack on eloquence is itself quite eloquent. It belongs to the rhetoric of anti-rhetoric stretching back from Kant to Paul and even earlier to Plato.³⁰ Given

²⁷ Barth, "The Need and Promise of Christian Preaching," 122-125.

²⁸ Barth, "The Word of God and the Task of the Ministry [1922]," in *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, esp. 198-217.

²⁹ Eduard Thurneysen, "Die Aufgabe der Predigt [1921]," in *Aufgabe der Predigt*, ed. Gert Hummel, Wege der Forschung, vol. 234 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1971), 108 and 111, alluding to Nietzsche's dictum, "Nur wo Gräber sind, gibt es Auferstehungen." Italics original. My translation. Unless otherwise indicated, all remaining translations are my own. Thurneysen's separation of theology and rhetoric with respect to preaching is paralleled by his subsequent separation of theology and psychology with respect to pastoral counseling. See in this regard the critique by Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, *Theology and Pastoral Counseling: A New Interdisciplinary Approach* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 77-83.

³⁰ These names are only suggestive and not exhaustive as the views of Locke and Jerome would also show. On Plato, see the commentary by George A. Kennedy on the Apology, the Gorgias, and the Phaedrus in *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition*

these polemics, Barth seems to drive "a stake into the heart of rhetoric."³¹ While he is often taken in this way, I think it is more accurate to say that Barth stakes a dogmatic claim over rhetoric. He re-situates its perennial concerns within a theological frame of reference. What is rejected is not rhetoric, as such, but an autonomous rhetoric, theologically ungoverned, that claims for its eloquence the power to make God real for people. If we examine Barth's own lectures on homiletics given in Bonn in 1932-1933, it becomes apparent that he does attend to rhetoric.³² Here, Barth circles back from his original question of a decade earlier, "How *can* one preach?" to the question, "How does one *do* it?" What is new is Barth's attempt to derive this rhetorical "How," from the dogmatic "What," or, better, "Who," so that rhetoric is taken captive by the Word of God and impressed into its service.

Barth's resulting homiletics rejects the sermon as a persuasive oration calling either for the decision of faith or for right conduct.³³ For Barth, the only decision that finally matters is God's decision to elect creaturely humanity in Jesus Christ—and to elect the creaturely words that bear witness to this event. The purpose of preaching is to announce this Good News which

from *Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 42-60, esp. 50; on Paul, see esp. 1 Cor. 1-4. See also Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 6 vols., ed. Wilhelm Weischedel (Darmstadt, 1957), 5:430-31, where Kant assigns "eloquence and pleasing speech (conjunctly rhetoric)" to "the fine arts," contrasting them to "oratorical art (*ars oratoria*)," which itself is "deserving of no attention in its intention to serve the weakness of men," by attempting "to deceive through fine appearance." Quoted by Manfred Josuttis, "Homiletik und Rhetorik [1968]," in Manfred Josuttis, *Rhetorik und Theologie in der Predigtarbeit: Homiletische Studien* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1985), 9.

³¹ Barth gladly drove a stake into the heart of rhetoric and called upon the newly widowed homiletics not to mourn but to dance on the grave." Thomas G. Long, "And How Shall They Hear? The Listener in Contemporary Preaching," in Gail R. O'Day and Thomas G. Long, eds., *Listening to the Word: Studies in Honor of Fred B. Craddock* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 177. Cf. "The renewal of our proclaiming means that our proclamation will ask only after the What, not after the How." Julius Schniewind, *Die geistliche Erneuerung des Pfarrerstandes*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1949), 7-8. Quoted by Josuttis, "Homiletik und Rhetorik," 10-11.

³² Karl Barth, *Homiletik: Wesen und Vorbereitung der Predigt*. (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1970). ET: Karl Barth, *Homiletics*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Donald E. Daniels (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991). Barth's rhetorical interest is evident here when he writes, "Respect for the hearers and their particularity [*Eigenart*] should allow the question of the 'How' of proclamation to appear large and important for us." *Homiletik*, p. 92.

³³ "The word 'announcement' [*Ankündigung*] has the advantage over 'proclamation' [*Verkündigung*] that in it God is the one who makes himself heard, who speaks, and not we, who simply have the role of announcing what God himself wants to say. This is what *epangelia* signifies in the New Testament. The word 'announcement' does not really carry with it a summons to human decision. A summons of this kind, which is taken solely between God and us, is in no sense constitutive for the task of preaching." Barth, *Homiletics*, 46. [GT, 32].

the scriptures promise.³⁴ In terms of the four aims of public address identified by Campbell, preaching comes closest to "enlightening the understanding." Any "persuading" that may occur, or any "enlightening" that is a saving illumination, can only be attributed to the divine Speaker and that hearing of the Word of God wrought by the Holy Spirit.³⁵ Humanly speaking, preaching is an informative utterance; but, with respect to God, preaching is a performative utterance. Only God can persuasively perform the Gospel and make significant to the hearer what is signified by the human herald.³⁶

For Barth, Jesus Christ, or God-with-us, is the Subject of preaching.³⁷ Likewise, this event of Jesus Christ is the subject matter or ultimate context of every scriptural text. Jesus Christ is the one to whom the scriptures bear witness, and for this reason preaching turns to them as the basis for its own witness.³⁸ Nevertheless, Barth rejects the rhetorical attempt to derive a subject for a sermon, other than Jesus Christ, from any particular text itself. Barth not only rejects topical preaching, whether catechetical, ethical, or occasional, but he also rejects expository preaching, if by that is meant extracting a subject or *scopus* from a pericope, which is then structured, expounded, and applied. Such textual preaching misses the true context of all scripture, namely, Jesus Christ, to whom it witnesses.³⁹ This kind of expository preaching represents a "bondage to the letter," a misuse of the Bible as a source rather than as a witness; it privileges the text over its context, its reference over its referent.⁴⁰ In other words, the only preaching Barth recognizes as worthy of the name is the self-proclamation of the Word of God.

³⁴ Barth, *Homiletics*, 51-53.

³⁵ "May it be that as we hear their word [i.e., the scriptural witnesses] we may hear the Word of him who alone can make it heard." Barth, *Homiletics*, 104. Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill and trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 1285-1286 [4.14.10]: "For, that the Word may not beat your ears in vain, and that the sacraments may not strike your eyes in vain, the Spirit shows us that in them it is God speaking to us, softening the stubbornness of our heart, and composing it to that obedience which it owes the Word of the Lord."

³⁶ For discussion of "divine performance" in the preaching event, see Charles L. Bartow, *God's Human Speech: A Practical Theology of Proclamation* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997).

³⁷ "All the action that takes place in preaching, which lies between the first advent and the second, is the action of the divine Subject." Barth, *Homiletics*, 47. "Not the word, 'Christ,' not some sort of description of Christ, but solely the event of God with us in Christ, Immanuel, God with us—this is the central point of all preaching." Barth, *Homiletik*, 36.

³⁸ Barth, *Homiletics*, 49-50, 75-81, 88, and 102-104.

³⁹ Barth, *Homiletics*, 49 and 102-103.

⁴⁰ Barth, *Homiletics*, 98-106. Barth is challenging theologically stunted historical-critical exegesis, whether employed by "liberals" or "conservatives." In Barth's view, interpretation proceeding "as though the historical meaning of the text were its total sense" is "a dogma—not a church dogma but a pagan dogma—which recognizes only humanity and its world and functions, among which is religion." *Homiletics*, 99.

But what rhetorical forms honor such preaching? For Barth, it is the expository form, but only in the sense that a sermon either follows the sequence of thought or contours of expression in the scriptural text, or it makes the text's center of gravity its own.⁴¹ Exegeting these scriptural passages means attending to the specificity and interrelatedness of their form and content but always in light of their theological context. This enables a sermon to follow what Barth calls "the way of witness."⁴² This way of witness, "the train of thought," or "distinctive movement of thought in a text," varies tremendously within the Bible.⁴³ Preachers, therefore, should "construct the corpus of the sermon in repetition of the text's own rhythm and with due regard to the proportions discerned by exegesis."⁴⁴ Preachers should honor this variety in scripture and never compose sermons according to some predetermined rhetorical pattern (whether a thematic sermon with "three points and a poem," a classically constructed oration that proceeds from an introduction to a conclusion, a two-step exposition-application model, a law-gospel pattern, or even a Lowry "loop" that follows the inherent dynamics or dramatic logic of a narrative passage.) The variety of scriptural forms simply defies such prefabricated templates. On the other hand, when homiletics maintains dogmatic clarity about the ultimate subject matter of preaching, the pulpit will not founder in biblicism, overwhelmed by the tyranny of a text.⁴⁵

As this overview indicates, Barth's theological framework explicitly treats the subject, the purpose, and the form of a sermon. In this way, he creates a theological rhetoric. Barth boldly shapes the principles of pulpit rhetoric by appeal to dogmatic criteria. This is further illustrated by his notorious rejection "in principle" of sermon introductions.⁴⁶ Barth argues on theological grounds that introductions mistakenly suggest a "point of contact [*Anknüpfungspunkt*] for an analogue in us which can be a point of entry for the Word of God."⁴⁷ Nevertheless, Barth can also give his students rhetorical guidance on "practical, or if one will, *psychological grounds*."⁴⁸ On these grounds, he also denounces introductions as "a waste of time"; they distract listeners and diminish the attentiveness already present when the preacher

⁴¹ Barth, *Homiletics*, 49.

⁴² Barth, *Homiletics*, 102-106, 113, and 121.

⁴³ Barth, *Homiletics*, 49 and 105.

⁴⁴ Barth, *Homiletics*, 126.

⁴⁵ Barth, *Homiletics*, 105. See also 126.

⁴⁶ Barth, *Homiletics*, 121. The only exception Barth allows is when the scripture reading immediately precedes the sermon. A brief analysis of the passage may then occur before the sermon proper.

⁴⁷ Barth, *Homiletics*, 124. [GT, 104].

⁴⁸ Barth, *Homiletik*, 101. Italics original.

begins; and, they often use a quotation or illustration that causes listeners' minds to wander.⁴⁹ While Barth's rhetorical advice on this question, as well as others, accords with his doctrine of revelation, it does not arise from that doctrine, as such, but presumably issues from his own experience as a preacher and listener of sermons. Moreover, despite his dogmatic strictures, Barth did introduce at least some of his sermons, at times rather extensively.⁵⁰ These contradictions in Barth's own position and practice raise the question whether his theological frame of reference is adequate for homiletics. If it were, why would Barth himself deviate from it?

By the 1960s, something of a rebellion was simmering within the Barthian ranks. Hans-Dieter Bastian, for example, found Barth's dialectic between the Word and the words "irreplaceably significant and effective" in pastorally reassuring uncertain preachers about the worthiness of their weekly task.⁵¹ Nevertheless, because Barth developed his theological framework from the standpoint of the preacher and the Bible, the hearers of the Word in their "real situation" drop out of the equation.⁵² In Bastian's judgment, "The dogmatic passage, which begins with the Bible text and terminates in the sermon, consistently overlooks that spoken communication moves beyond the preacher to the hearer and that it may be examined in terms of its effects or non-effects."⁵³ But this is precisely the kind of rhetorical inquiry and guidance for which dogmatic theology is ill-equipped, as witness Barth's own ad hoc advice to would-be preachers. Another frame of reference is needed.⁵⁴ As the 1960s turned into the 70s, homiletics increasingly sought that guidance by (re)turning to rhetoric.

III. THE (RE)TURN TO RHETORIC

One of the features of the contemporary academic scene is the degree to which so many disciplines have been reconceived as subfields, first of her-

⁴⁹ Barth, *Homiletics*, 122-123.

⁵⁰ See, e.g., two Christmas sermons, "Unto You is Born this Day a Saviour [1954]" and "The Great Dispensation [1957]," in Karl Barth, *Deliverance to the Captives*, trans. Marguerite Wieser (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), 20-27 and 101-108.

⁵¹ Hans-Dieter Bastian, "From the Word to the Words: Karl Barth and the Tasks of Practical Theology," trans. Richard Ulrich, in *Theology of the Liberating Word*, ed. Frederick Herzog (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), 48.

⁵² Bastian, "From the Word to the Words," 49.

⁵³ Bastian, "From the Word to the Words," 49.

⁵⁴ "We are not concerned with an abolition of the Word-words dialectic in dogmatics, but with its heuristically necessary suspension in practical theology." Bastian, "From the Word to the Words," 51.

meneutics and, more recently, of rhetoric.⁵⁵ Even Barthian dogmatics has undergone a transposition into hermeneutics at the hands of Hans Frei⁵⁶ and David Kelsey,⁵⁷ while the compelling character of Barth's use of language has itself been subjected to rhetorical analysis by Stephen Webb.⁵⁸ In light of such developments as these, it is not surprising that homiletics, too, has taken its own "turn to rhetoric." Since the original publication in 1971 of Fred Craddock's *As One without Authority*, American homiletical theory has increasingly attended to the role of listeners in the practice of preaching.⁵⁹ Recently, heeding David Buttrick's plea for homiletics "to make up and relate to rhetoric once again,"⁶⁰ Lucy Lind Hogan and Robert Reid have coauthored *Connecting with the Congregation: Rhetoric and the Art of Preaching*.⁶¹ This renewed regard for eloquence in the pulpit can be seen, in the American context, as a "re-turn" to homiletics' native frame of reference.

⁵⁵ See Herbert W. Simons, ed., *The Rhetorical Turn* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.) For the implications of this "turn" in practical theology, see Richard Robert Osmer, "Practical Theology as Argument, Rhetoric, and Conversation," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 18, no. 1 (1997):46-73.

⁵⁶ Hans W. Frei, *The Identity of Jesus Christ: The Hermeneutical Bases of Dogmatic Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975). The "hermeneutical bases" include "realistic narrative," which allegedly renders the identity and, hence, presence of Jesus Christ.

⁵⁷ David H. Kelsey, *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975). In Kelsey, Barth's dogmatically normative concept of the Word of God is turned into the hermeneutically descriptive concept of a "discrimen" by which normative construals of scripture, including Barth's, may be compared. Kelsey's work has proven heuristically rich for homiletics as adapted by Cleophus J. LaRue, *The Heart of Black Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), esp. 16-19.

⁵⁸ Stephen H. Webb, *Re-figuring Theology: The Rhetoric of Karl Barth*, SUNY Series in Rhetoric and Theology (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991). Gert Otto observes how "rhetorically stamped" Barth's language really is "not only in the expressionistic coloring of the Romans commentary, but also in wide sections of the Church Dogmatics." Nevertheless, Barth's use of language as such (and, for that matter, Thurneysen's as well) "had no consequences for homiletical theory." Gert Otto, *Predigt als Rede: Über die Wechselwirkungen von Homiletik und Rhetorik* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1976), 19.

⁵⁹ Fred B. Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 3rd ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979). For subsequent proposals within an audience-attentive rhetorical framework, see David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987); Christine M. Smith, *Weaving the Sermon: Preaching in a Feminist Perspective* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989); John S. McClure, *The Roundtable Pulpit: Where Leadership and Preaching Meet* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995); Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997); and, Lucy Atkinson Rose, *Sharing the Word: Preaching in the Roundtable Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997).

⁶⁰ David Buttrick, *A Captive Voice: The Liberation of Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 3.

⁶¹ Lucy Lind Hogan and Robert Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation: Rhetoric and the Art of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999). The authors accurately describe their book as "a basic *rhetoric* of preaching." 158. *Italics original*.

While I focus primarily on the work of Hogan and Reid, it has numerous parallels in German homiletics. Beginning in 1968, with a seminal essay by Manfred Josuttis,⁶² followed by a spate of books from Gert Otto of the University of Mainz,⁶³ a growing body of scholarly work has called for a thoroughly rhetorical homiletics.⁶⁴ Otto heralds this new rhetorical paradigm, as freeing homiletics from theological tutelage:

Preaching is a rhetorical task. Therefore, homiletics is treated in connection with rhetoric. Theological reflection, exegetical or historical or systematic, has its place then within the rhetorical conceptual framework; but, theology has neither priority nor superiority. For reflection on formulated homiletical questions, rhetoric is dominant, not theology.⁶⁵

Otto explicitly rejects deriving rhetorical rules from the propositions of systematic or dialectical theology, and he blames this Barthian approach for the "practical ineffectiveness of modern homiletics."⁶⁶ The resulting crisis will only be remedied by taking renewed responsibility for preaching as an act of public speaking.

However high or low a theology may estimate preaching, it is undeniable that "*a sermon is a speech*."⁶⁷ Whether it takes written form or not, a sermon is composed, its thoughts arranged, and its words chosen and delivered. Rhetoric reflects upon, directs, and is informed by these practices of public speech making, especially in connection with questions of audience and

⁶² Josuttis, "Homiletik und Rhetorik," in Josuttis, *Rhetorik und Theologie in der Predigtarbeit: Homiletische Studien*, 9-28.

⁶³ In addition to his *Predigt als Rede* (cited above, n. 58), see esp. Gert Otto, *Predigt als rhetorische Aufgabe: Homiletische Perspektiven* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1987); and, *Rhetorische Predigtlehre: Ein Grundriss*. (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1999). For a sermon by Otto, see "'Haves' and 'Have-Nots,'" translated by Jeffrey T. Myers, *Homiletic* 15, no. 2 (1990):13-15.

⁶⁴ Among notable works are Rolf Zerfass, *Grundkurs Predigt*, 2 vols. (Düsseldorf, 1987-92); Karl-Fritz Daiber, *Predigt als religiöse Rede* (München, 1991); Peter Bukowski, *Predigt wahrnehmen: Homiletische Perspektiven* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1992); Thomas Reschke and Michael Thiele, *Predigt und Rhetorik: Ein Querschnitt durch den Kern der Homiletik aus rhetorisch-praktischer Sicht*, with a foreword by Gert Otto, *Studien zur Praktischen Theologie*, 39 (St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1992); and, Klaus Müller, *Homiletik: Ein Handbuch für kritische Zeiten* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1994).

⁶⁵ Otto, *Rhetorische Predigtlehre*, 7, stating here the overall thesis of this book. For Otto, "Rhetoric refers primarily . . . to effective text production, text interpretation, and text analysis," 7. Rhetoric, therefore, includes hermeneutics, literary criticism, and poetics.

⁶⁶ Otto, *Rhetorische Predigtlehre*, 7.

⁶⁷ Otto, *Predigt als Rede*, 21, citing his first thesis from his 1970 "Thesen zur Problematik der Predigt," and echoing Johann Lorenz von Mosheim (1693-1755): "Eine Predigt ist eine Rede . . ." in *Anweisung erbaulich zu predigen*, ed. C. E. von Windheim (Erlangen, 1762), 1, quoted by Josuttis, "Homiletik und Rhetorik," 11. Italics original. My translation. Cf. Barth, *Homiletik*, 99: "Eine Predigt ist zwar eine Rede und soll es auch sein . . ."

occasion. Preaching is both a rhetorical art and a rhetorical act.⁶⁸ Rhetoric, therefore, is the basic frame of reference for homiletics. How could it be otherwise? As Otto observes, preaching must deal with "the same rhetorical, communication-theoretical, and psychological problems" as any other form of public address.⁶⁹ This explains why Hogan and Reid claim, "It is only when the student and preacher understand the basics of the art of effective communication that they can explore how it is that theology affects this practice."⁷⁰ In other words, rhetoric is the constant; theology is the variable.

Hogan and Reid define rhetoric as "the study of what is persuasive in human communication, whether intentional, or simply a consequence of the human condition."⁷¹ Following Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, they also speak further of "a rhetorical act," for example, a sermon, as an "'intentional, created, polished attempt to overcome the obstacles in a given situation with a specific audience on a given issue to achieve a particular end.'"⁷² What this latter-day Campbell calls a "rhetorical act," George Campbell long ago called "eloquence." Standing in this venerable tradition, Hogan and Reid present the classic rhetorical proofs, arrangement theory, and distinctions of style, all time-tested considerations that serve persuasive discourse and, thereby, pulpit eloquence.

Since the overarching purpose of a sermon is to "move and persuade people in the congregation,"⁷³ ethos considerations remain as paramount for Hogan and Reid as they were for Witherspoon, Campbell, and Blair. Admitting that listeners know their preachers' "frailties" well, Hogan and Reid assert that "Christian leaders who preach the gospel have always been called to strive for personal virtue because virtue matters in the proclamation of the gospel."⁷⁴ In this regard, they quote with favor Susan Hedahl's claim, baptizing Aristotle, that "'Who preaches is the most essential component for the receptivity of the Gospel.'"⁷⁵ The notion that God's Word might be on the lips of Graham Greene's licentious "whiskey priest" or Walker Percy's

⁶⁸ Hogan and Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation*, 16. The authors "agree that preaching is more than a rhetorical art," but it is never less than that. Unfortunately, this "more" is neither specified nor developed in any detail. See 43.

⁶⁹ Otto, *Predigt als rhetorische Aufgabe*, 18-19, quoting thesis two from his 1970 "Thesen zur Problematik der Predigt."

⁷⁰ Hogan and Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation*, 13.

⁷¹ Hogan and Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation*, 9.

⁷² Hogan and Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation*, 11 and 12, quoting Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *The Rhetorical Act*, 2nd ed. (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing, 1996), 9.

⁷³ Hogan and Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation*, 16.

⁷⁴ Hogan and Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation*, 55-56.

⁷⁵ Hogan and Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation*, 55, quoting from "Character," *Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching*, by Susan K. Hedahl.

"stupid preachers" is far removed from this rhetorical framework where "virtue matters."⁷⁶

If the task of preaching is broadly understood as persuasive, then what is the subject matter of preaching? Here, Hogan and Reid are evasive or vague. They do indicate that "early Christian homilies assumed that the subject matter of the Christian message was *revealed truth* (cf. 1 Cor. 2:1-5)," but, since "the subject matter of rhetoric is the *probable* and *plausible*," they do not themselves argue for "revealed truth" as the subject matter of preaching.⁷⁷ Again, Hogan and Reid claim that Martin Luther King Jr. preached "God's Word"; that in King we hear "*eloquence* in service to the gospel"; that preachers "are the instruments upon which God plays" to bring "words of judgment . . . comfort and release"; that "human preachers can be the instruments of God's grace in the world"; and, that preaching is "the proclamation of the good news," either in the sense of people "talking about what God has done for them," or "doing good deeds for others."⁷⁸ Other than further indicating that "God's Word," like human words, has "power,"⁷⁹ all of these terms, "God's Word," "gospel," "grace," "good news," suggesting a theological subject matter, are sprinkled here and there without definition or discussion of where the preacher might derive their content. They operate at the level of "preacher talk" or "stained-glass" cliché. Moreover, apart from a cryptic reference or two, Hogan and Reid do not discuss, with respect to the preaching event, whether the sermon subject matter exercises agency. Sometimes, they seem to suggest that the subject matter is purely a malleable symbol awaiting rhetorical manipulation or construction.⁸⁰ These theological gaps do not seem to worry our authors, because the rules of rhetoric regulate the sermon—whatever its subject matter may turn out to be. Rhetoric is the constant; theology is the variable.

⁷⁶ The allusions are to Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory* (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1940) and Walker Percy, *The Second Coming* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1980).

⁷⁷ Hogan and Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation*, 43-44. Italics original.

⁷⁸ Hogan and Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation*, with citations from 7, 8, 9, and 11-12. The metaphor of God "playing on" the preacher like a trombone, is an allusion of James Weldon Johnson taken from Richard Lischer, *The Preacher King: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Word that Moved America* (Oxford University Press, 1995), 12.

⁷⁹ Hogan and Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation*, 108.

⁸⁰ Hogan and Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation*, cf. 8 and 10. There appears here an oscillation between an "instrumental" rhetoric (that can allow for a trans-semiotic Agent as the subject matter) and a "critical" rhetoric that communally constructs the subject matter of preaching. By and large, the authors seem to prefer the former as their acknowledged differences with Lucy Rose over argumentative persuasion may suggest. See 89-110, esp. 109. For the distinction between "instrumental" and "critical" rhetoric, see Rolf Zeffass, *Grundkurs Predigt*, 1:35-36, cited by Otto, *Rhetorische Predigtlehre*, 99-100.

If Hogan and Reid are rather tight-lipped about what God may be up to in a sermon, they are enthusiastic about what rhetoric can enable the human preacher to accomplish. Indeed, with reference to Martin Luther King Jr., it was through "his careful attention to words and figures of speech, and by adaptation to his audience" that his pulpit became "a place from which to stand in order to move the world. Dr. King preached and the valleys began to be filled."⁸¹ Preachers, we are told, "can learn to take control of the preaching intention implicit in the design of a sermon."⁸² We are also assured that rhetoric can equip preachers "to facilitate an *Encounter* with God/Spirit/'the Lord'" should this "kerygmatic" option be desired.⁸³ Our authors further tell us that "in the Kerygmatic approach the preacher emphasizes the individual's ability to have an encounter with God in the context of a community of faith."⁸⁴ In other words, what is traditionally predicated of the Holy Spirit or the event of divine revelation can be accomplished by the preacher's own arsenal of weapons furnished and sharpened by rhetoric. It is the art of eloquence, not the Holy Spirit, that leads us to the eschaton.

Unlike George Campbell, who retained, even in the Enlightenment, enough of the doctrine of human depravity to acknowledge the limitations of rhetoric, one finds no such limitations in the homiletics of Lucy Hogan and Robert Reid. The individual has the ability to encounter God; the preacher has the power to make it happen; and, the rhetorical situation of preaching is that of "a good person offering good reasons to good people."⁸⁵ However we interpret these astonishing statements, with their echoes of American Civil Religion, they do reveal that a strictly rhetorical homiletics is never theologically neutral. In this case, it is thoroughly and confidently Pelagian, with consequences for every doctrine of the Christian faith.

⁸¹ Hogan and Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation*, 8. Cf. King's biographer, "Martin Luther King, Jr. was a B+ preacher until he got caught up in something larger than himself." Richard Lischer, "Why I Am Not Persuasive," *Homiletic* 24, no. 2 (1999):16.

⁸² Hogan and Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation*, 22.

⁸³ Hogan and Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation*, 119. Italics original. See further 124-126. Other options include explanatory expository preaching; making possible an experience of provisional meaning; and, presenting the storied-identity of God or Christ in the interest of Christian formation. In every case, these purposes of a sermon remain within the context of persuasion and are predicated of, or "controlled by," the preacher's rhetorical skills. See 16 and 115-131, esp. 118-119.

⁸⁴ Hogan and Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation*, 124. Capitalization original. In contrast to a previous generation of homiletical theorists, kerygmatic approaches to preaching are discussed here without reference to Rudolf Bultmann. Thus recurs the lacuna also found in the exposition of "kerygmatic theory" by Lucy Rose, *Sharing the Word*, 37-56.

⁸⁵ Hogan and Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation*, 91. Original capitalized in bold face as a heading.

IV. REORIENTATION

The permanent contribution of Karl Barth for homiletical theory was to retrieve the true subject of preaching, namely, the subject matter of the Christian faith, the Word of God or God-with-us, in the act and event of self-revelation. Arguably paraphrasing the Second Helvetic Confession (1566) that "The Preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God," Barth partly defines preaching, in the first instance, as "the Word of God which [God] himself speaks, claiming for the purpose the exposition of a biblical text in free human words . . ."⁸⁶ The God of Christian preaching is the speaking God of the scriptures. We cannot preach as if this subject matter of our preaching were at our disposal or under our control. We do not create the Creator of the Gospel, and the Word of God is not a commodity we peddle (cf. 2 Cor. 2:17). Rather, as Paul reminds the Corinthians, "We are ambassadors for Christ, *God making his appeal* through us . . ." (2 Cor. 5:20, RSV). In this sense, Hedahl's claim is correct, "*Who* preaches is the most essential component for the receptivity of the Gospel"; but, the "Who" in question is not, as Hedahl supposes, Aristotle's pulpit orator; it is Christ Jesus, the Word of God. This Word alone is the subject matter of every sermon worthy of the name. Therefore, theology—not rhetoric—is the basic frame of reference by which homiletics finds its true orientation—or reorientation.

If we cannot preach as if the subject matter of a sermon were under our control, neither can we preach as if the subject matter were indifferent to our words of witness. Again, "*We are* ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal *through us* . . ."⁸⁷ Rhetorical homiletics, however much it may seek to sideline or suspend the speaking God, correctly insists against all forms of pietism and spiritualism that whatever else a sermon is, it is at least a speech.⁸⁸ Its proponents render true service to the church when they call on

⁸⁶ Barth, *Homiletics*, 44. Cf. The Second Helvetic Confession, in *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*, pt. 1, *Book of Confessions* (Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, 1994), 5.004.

⁸⁷ So Lucy Lind Hogan, "Rethinking Persuasion: Developing an Incarnational Theology of Preaching," *Homiletic* 24, no. 2 (1999), 11, albeit non-dialectically within a theology of glory.

⁸⁸ Hogan and Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation*, 13: "Effective preaching is effective rhetoric, and we cannot begin a theory of preaching pietistically devoid of an understanding of the art of rhetoric." Cf. Barth, *Homiletic*, 119: "To be sure a sermon is a speech. It has to be this. But in this speech we should not leave it up to the Holy Spirit (or some other spirit!) to inspire the words, no matter whether we have an aptitude for speaking or not."

For Barth, the self-authentication of the Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit are not put forward as "available mechanisms of theological self-exoneration" as they may have become for those evading the hard work of sermon preparation. See Ernst Lange,

preachers to take responsibility for their words in relation to their listeners.⁸⁹ As preachers we do not invent the gospel of God (especially on Saturday nights!), but we do invent our sermons. Rhetoric can teach us to speak more intentionally, more engagingly, and more responsibly. The same Second Helvetic Confession, that identifies the Word of God with the preaching of the Word of God, also requires “pious eloquence” for those seeking ordination to the ministry of this Word.⁹⁰ Similarly, Barth defines preaching not only as “the Word of God which [God] himself speaks,” but, continuing dialectically, as “the attempt enjoined upon the church to serve God’s own Word, through one who is called thereto, by expounding a biblical text in free human words and making it relevant to contemporaries, as the announcement [*Ankündigung*] of what they have to hear from God himself.”⁹¹

Having reaffirmed both the theological subject matter of preaching and the need for rhetorical responsibility in honoring it, have we not simply restated the impasse between two incommensurable frames of reference, namely, the theological and the rhetorical, albeit having done so dialectically and, to be sure, with an eye on the Chalcedonian Formula? We still need clarification about how these two frames of reference might be appropriately related.

In my judgment, Barth’s own attempts to relate the two in his homiletical theory are incoherent. Let me offer two examples. First, recall that Barth rejects sermon introductions on the grounds that they mistakenly suggest a “point of contact” in the creature by which the divine Word enters. Here, Barth moves directly from dogmatics to formulate for homiletics a proscriptive guideline. In this case, the attempt falters largely on logical grounds. While sermon introductions could suggest this “analogy of being,” it does not follow that they necessarily do so. Barth conflates the rhetorical “point of contact” between the preacher and the listeners, to which homiletics legitimately attends, with the “analogy of being” shared by the creature and the

“Zur Theorie und Praxis der Predigtarbeit [1967],” in *Predigen als Beruf*, ed. Rüdiger Schloz (Stuttgart, 1976), 55.

⁸⁹ The deaths and injuries in Bombay, India, from rioting triggered by the televised remarks of the Rev. Jerry Falwell, aired on October 6, 2002, calling Islam’s prophet Muhammed a “terrorist,” and for which Falwell has since apologized, remind us all of the danger, and even deadliness, of irresponsible words, especially from preachers. See “Falwell Recants Slur against Muhammed,” *The Christian Century*, October 23–November 5, 2002, 15.

⁹⁰ The Second Helvetic Confession, 5.150. Likewise, George Campbell reports from eighteenth-century Scotland that ordination examinations by presbyteries included “the popular sermon . . . chiefly intended for trying the candidate’s abilities in instructing and persuading, and consequently of his fitness for the pulpit.” *Lectures on Systematic Theology and Pulpit Eloquence*, 33. Italics original. Not surprisingly, Campbell regards “pulpit eloquence” as “necessary . . . for the right discharge of the ministerial office.” 37.

⁹¹ Barth, *Homiletics*, 44, with translation altered. Cf. Barth, *Homiletik*, 30.

Creator, to which Barthian dogmatics is opposed. Having conflated two things that should have been kept distinct, Barth then rejects the former on the grounds of the latter. In this instance, all that dogmatics can rightfully say to a homiletics informed by rhetoric is that no sermon introduction, however eloquent, establishes revelation or has the power to introduce us to the living God. This could be a salutary word for homiletics to hear. But dogmatics, as such, has no right to demand, as Barth does, that homiletical theory should outlaw sermon introductions.

A second incoherence arises, again in regard to sermon introductions, when Barth advises that they are "distracting" and a "waste of time." He frankly admits that these are "practical" or "psychological" reasons for getting rid of them. As a former pastor, with years of preaching experience, Barth is certainly entitled to his opinions. Nevertheless, if the theological frame of reference is primary, then on what *theological* grounds can Barth unexpectedly move to a rhetorical frame of reference where the psychological needs and the cultural context of the listeners affect the very structure of the sermon? This incoherence in Barth's homiletical theory arises through his failure to furnish theological arguments authorizing rhetoric.

How does a theology of the Word of God authorize rhetorical judgments, made on rhetorical grounds, with respect to preaching? In pursuit of an answer, I offer the following thesis: *Preaching is more faithful to the Word of God when it is fitting or appropriate to its hearers' context.* One possible way to defend this thesis is by means of the concept of *concursum*, that is, the "concurring" or "accompanying" of divine and human action, traditionally associated with Lutheran and Reformed doctrines of providence.⁹² As recently interpreted by Christopher Morse, *concursum* speaks of "the conforming of God's grace to the created integrity of its recipient"; that is, "God's providing is always custom made to fit the creaturely recipient so that the creature's own freedom is never abrogated but activated."⁹³ Grace is God coming all the way down to meet us, respecting and not violating, our creaturely context and condition. If this is the case, then God's grace is richly differentiated.

According to Barth's reading of the doctrine in his *Church Dogmatics*, God's "power . . . gives to each one that which is proper to it, that which God

⁹² See, Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3, pt. 3, *The Doctrine of Creation*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. G. W. Bromiley and R. J. Ehrlich (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1960), 90-153; Otto Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, 2 vols., trans. and annotated by Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981), 1:516-519; and, Christopher Morse, *Not Every Spirit: A Dogmatics of Christian Disbelief*, esp. 219-220.

⁹³ Morse, *Not Every Spirit*, 219.

Himself has ordained should be proper to it. God . . . is not like a school-master who gives the same lesson to the whole class, or an officer who moves his whole squadron in the same direction, or a bureaucrat who once an outlook or principle is embedded in his own little head rules his whole department in accordance with it."⁹⁴ By contrast, God accompanies the creature, honoring each one's dignity, integrity, and particularity.

This is the way it is with God-with-us in the economy of salvation. God accompanies us in those patterns of relationality by which God constitutes Godself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As Barth explains,

It is this God, who is not poor in Himself but rich, who works together with the creature. He does not do it uniformly or monotonously or without differentiation, for He is not uniform or monotonous or undifferentiated in Himself. If He were to do it in this way He would be doing violence to His own nature; He would not be God.⁹⁵

God's grace is richly differentiated toward the creature because God is richly differentiated in his triune being.

This Good News of God's own giving to each creature what is contextually fitting and appropriate to it, with full regard for its particularity, authorizes the church's own *concursus* in the ministry of this Word. Our own words of witness are to be fitting and appropriate to our listeners.⁹⁶ Notice, the theological authorization of rhetoric is analogically inferred, and, therefore, indirect, but that is sufficient for rhetoric to play its proper part in homiletics.⁹⁷ This is not to say, in testing the language of the church for its fidelity to the Word of God, that dogmatics can never utter a direct "No" by way of

⁹⁴ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 3/3:138.

⁹⁵ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 3/3:138.

⁹⁶ Cf. Otto, *Predigt als Rede*, 27: The hearer "is not the 'addressee' whose name I simply write on the envelope, without a second thought about whom I am actually writing. . . . What one, in the view of *these* hearers, in *this* situation, within *this* limitation, will *reach* and *effect*—e.g., encouragement or comfort, criticism or enlightenment or information, keener insight or highly voiced joy—is one of the most important questions that stands openly or secretly behind every [sermon] preparation." Italics original. See also Hogan and Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation*, 16. Provided this rhetorical claim is understood dialectically and not reductionistically, it can be affirmed theologically.

⁹⁷ Other theological routes to authorize a rhetorically attentive homiletics come to mind, including the Thomistic *convenientia* and the Calvinian *accommodare*. For discussion of the former, see John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, "Truth and Touch," in *Truth in Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2001); of the latter, see Ford Lewis Battles, "God Was Accommodating Himself to Human Capacity," *Interpretation* 31, no. 1 (1977):19-38. For a proposal that draws on the theme of divine accommodation to authorize its contextual homiletic, see Tisdale, *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art*, 1997, 35-37. For a proposal that draws on divine accommodation to authorize "a variety of possible sermon strategies," see Bartow, *God's Human Speech*, 142. Italics original.

proscription or a direct "Yes" by way of prescription; but, it is to affirm that rhetorical considerations, requiring rhetorical judgments as to what is fitting and appropriate, are, in fact, entailed and authorized by the Word of God.⁹⁸

So theologically authorized, I can now survey this patient audience of faculty colleagues, dear friends, and fellow students, and with good conscience rhetorically perform Martin Luther's sixth rule for preachers: They "should know when to stop."⁹⁹

⁹⁸ A parallel to this judgment is found in Calvin's contention that the Word of God proscribes (Ex. 20:4) the use of graven images in worship (*Inst.* 1.11.1) and prescribes (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 11:20) frequent communion (*Inst.* 4.17.44), while leaving those matters neither proscribed nor proscribed by the Word of God (*adiaphora*) to the best judgment of the church. In regard to these latter matters, Calvin argues that the Word of God (1 Cor. 14:40) authorizes the church to make its own decisions touching upon decorum and order, sensitive "to the customs of each nation and age," (*Inst.* 4.10.30).

⁹⁹ Martin Luther, *Luthers Werke in Auswahl*, vol. 7, *Predigten*, ed. Emanuel Hirsch (Berlin: Verlag von Walter de Gruyter and Co., 1932), 38.

From Mission and Theology to Missional Theology*

by DARRELL LIKENS GUDER

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I. INTRODUCTION: MISSION AT PRINCETON SEMINARY

Although the term “missional” is of recent coinage and the Luce Chair in Missional and Ecumenical Theology is a new foundation of which I am honored to be the first incumbent, the subject of mission has a long and honorable history at Princeton Seminary. The design of the Seminary, as it was drafted and adopted by the General Assembly in 1811, included the intention “to found a nursery for missionaries to the heathen . . . in which youth may receive that appropriate training which may lay a foundation for their ultimately becoming eminently qualified for missionary work.”¹ In 1830, the General Assembly resolved to appoint a professor to the faculty “to bear the name and title of the ‘Professor of Pastoral Theology and Missionary Instruction,’” arguing that “the spirit of the religion of Jesus Christ is essentially a spirit of Missions,” and that the church should therefore “make all her establishments tributary to [this spirit’s] advancement.”² Speaking of the courses that were then offered, Olav Myklebust, the chronicler of mission in theological education, noted, “So far as we know, these are the first courses on the subject given in a theological seminary or school in the U.S.A. and, in fact, anywhere.”³

Mission disappeared in the Catalogue after 1855, but in the subsequent decades the theme was certainly present on the campus, judging especially from the way that faculty continued to lecture and write about it. It was a Princeton Seminary student who was the catalyst in 1880 for the formation of the Interseminary Missionary Alliance, which was the forerunner of the Student Volunteer Movement that came on the scene in

**Dem Freund und Mentor Eberhard Busch in Dankbarkeit gewidmet.*

¹*Catalogue of Princeton Theological Seminary, 1947-1948, 11f., cited in Olav Myklebust, The Study of Missions in Theological Education, 2 vols., Oslo: Forlaget Land og Kirke, 1955, 1:146.*

²Excerpted from the Minutes of the General Assembly of 1830, cited in Myklebust, *Study of Missions*, 1:147f.

³Myklebust, *Study of Missions*, 1:149.

1886.⁴ Robert Speer reported at the Seminary's centenary in 1912 that in its first century, 410 Princeton graduates had enlisted in foreign mission—that was one out of every thirteen alumni.⁵

Mission returned to the curriculum in 1895, with courses on missionary apologetics, mission history, missionary biography, and the biblical basis of missions. Although ensconced in the area of Practical Theology, the Catalogue's description of mission studies indicated that the subject matter ranged across all the theological disciplines, but focused on the formation of missionaries. In that same decade, the students at Princeton instituted and endowed the Student's Lectureship on Missions, for which the first lecturer was James S. Dennis on the subject, "Foreign Missions after a Century." Among his successors in that lectureship in the next years were Robert E. Speer and John R. Mott.⁶

When J. Ross Stevenson became President of Princeton in 1914, he also became the first incumbent of a new Chair of History of Religions and Christian Missions, signaling a shift of the study of mission from its location as a sub-theme of Practical Theology to its own curricular area. Samuel M. Zwemer joined the faculty in History of Religions in 1930, bringing years of experience as a missionary in the world of Islam and a strong interest in comparative religions.

With the coming of John Mackay to the Seminary, the tradition of a missiologist-president continued. His experience in Latin America, where he served with great distinction as an academic theologian and philosopher, was linked with his articulate commitment to the ecumenical movement, in which he was already an internationally recognized leader. He was appointed both President and Professor of Ecumenics, coining the term to define his interest and expertise. Within a year of his arrival, Ecumenics became a sub-division of the Department of History, and the separate area of History of Religions and Christian Missions disappeared from the curriculum. When the International Missionary Council convened in Whitby, Canada, in 1948, he reported, "In Princeton we have established a new course for which we have minted a new name. We call it ecumenics. By ecumenics we mean 'The Science of the Church Universal,' conceived as a world missionary commu-

⁴William Richey Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations: A History of the International Missionary Council And Its Nineteenth-Century Background*, New York: Harper & Row, 1952, repr. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2002, 83f.; the student alluded to was Robert Mateer.

⁵R. E. Speer, "Princeton on the Mission Field," *The Centennial Celebration of the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. at Princeton, New Jersey (1912)*, 419, cited in Myklebust, *Study of Missions*, 1:364; 2:88.

⁶Myklebust, *Study of Missions*, 1:387.

nity; its nature, functions, relations and strategy.”⁷ This course title became the title of his classic book, published in 1964, a work which makes very clear that the study of mission is a theological and historical discipline. The role of mission studies at Princeton has continued to cross departmental borders in an inter-disciplinary fashion. As a member of the Theology Department, Charles West played a major role in the formation of the present doctoral program in Mission, Ecumenics, and the History of Religion, which continues to be at home in the History Department. The establishment of the Luce Chair in Missional and Ecumenical Theology in the Theology Department honors this inter-disciplinary tradition, and I am humbled by the cloud of witnesses, these theologians, historians, ethicists, and all of them ecumenists, who have built Princeton’s tradition as a major center of mission studies: Stevenson, Zwemer, Christy Wilson, Mackay, West, Shaull, Moffatt, Neely, Jurji and Ryerson. My colleagues, Luis Rivera-Pagán and Richard Fox Young, and I are privileged to stand on the shoulders of such giants.

II. MISSION STUDIES AS A PRACTICAL DISCIPLINE

As far as the general development of mission study is concerned, Princeton has been, since early in the twentieth century, out ahead of the larger and much slower process of developing mission’s voice within the theological guild. Gerald Anderson, writing in 1961, bemoaned the fact that there was “surprisingly little creative theological endeavor available for guidance” when one turned to the “underlying principles and theological presuppositions for the Christian mission.”⁸ In spite of the fact that the subject of mission had been included in a variety of ways in the curricula of theological education since the early nineteenth century, the relationship between theology and mission was mainly seen as a matter of theory and practice. This was the pattern established when the subject of mission first entered into the vocabulary of western theological education, which took place early in the nineteenth century in Germany. Schleiermacher is credited with the invention of the discipline of Practical Theology in his *Brief Outline of the Study of Theology*. In its second edition, he expressly mentioned missions in his

⁷John Mackay, “With Christ to the Frontier,” in C. W. Ranson, ed., *Renewal and Advance: Christian Witness in a Revolutionary World*, London: Edinburgh House Press, 1948, 203; see also Myklebust, *Study of Missions*, 2:91. See also John Mackay, *Ecumenics: The Science of the Church Universal*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964.

⁸Gerald Anderson, ed., *The Theology of the Christian Mission*, New York: McGraw Hill, 1961, 3.

discussion of catechetics, noting that a "theory of missions" would be desirable inasmuch as there had not been such a thing up to then.⁹

The view that the study of mission was primarily a practical discipline, focusing on methods and practices and the theory that supports them, reflected the nature of the burgeoning world missionary movement in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The missionary enterprise was a commitment and engagement of western Christendom, emerging out of its modern revivals and awakenings on both sides of the North Atlantic, and imbued with the unquestioned assumption that the western Christian tradition represented normative Christianity. David Bosch provocatively describes the modern missionary movement as "mission in the wake of the enlightenment."¹⁰ It was the enlightened obligation of the western church to take the gospel, along with the benefits of western civilization, to the rest of the unevangelized world, confident that the evident superiority of both the Christian faith and its accompanying culture would overcome all resistance and carry the day.

So, as far as the missionary enterprise was concerned, if theological scholarship took notice of it at all, then it did so to inspire enthusiasm for mission and to train students in the skills of mission. The relation of mission to theology was that of a subsidiary ministry practice, training missionaries next to the formation of local pastors.¹¹ With all of his commitment to and support of mission, Charles Hodge never mentioned the subject in his *Systematic Theology*! For the theological guild at the turn of the twentieth century, mission was basically treated as one ministry activity among many in the division of Practical Theology. This reflected the impressive dynamism of the missionary movement, the self-assurance of the western theological traditions, and the Enlightened sense of optimism that global mission was a strategy to be laid out and then accomplished.

III. MISSION AND THEOLOGY IN THE EMERGING ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

The planners of the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh agreed that there would be no discussion of questions of "doctrine or Church polity" in the program; it was only under these terms that the Anglicans

⁹Myklebust, *Study of Missions*, 1:85f.; Johannes Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1978, 6f.

¹⁰David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991, 262ff.

¹¹Next to this emphasis upon missionary formation, the academic study of mission was, by the latter part of the 19th century, also generating major areas of scholarship in anthropology, linguistics, and ethnology, much of which eventually made its way into the social science curricula of the university. See Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology*, 10f.

agreed to participate.¹² At the founding meeting of the International Missionary Council at Lake Mohonk in 1921, one of the organizational principles was that “no decision should be sought from the Council and [no] statement should be issued by it ‘on any matter involving an ecclesiastical or doctrinal question, on which the members of the Council or bodies constituting the Council may differ among themselves.’”¹³ This policy reflected the western consensus that the mission enterprise was really a matter of commitment to world evangelization and the strategy to do it, not of theology. There was certainly no sense that the hallowed theological traditions of Christendom might themselves be challenged or engaged by the church’s missionary enterprise. The theological scholarship which the missionaries took into the non-western world, wherever they established institutions for pastoral formation, was invariably the theology written and taught in their faculties back home. I well remember a student from Pakistan who told me one day that his theological education in his home seminary had consisted of memorizing the content of Louis Berkhof’s *Systematic Theology*—and he was describing the curriculum in the 1980’s.

This theological abstinence on the part of the mission discussion could not be maintained. Martin Kähler’s much quoted dictum, “The oldest mission became the mother of theology,” from the year 1908, proved to be a valid description of not only the early church’s theological process but of emergent mission theology in the twentieth century.¹⁴ In spite of its declared policy, the International Missionary Council found itself engaged in theological work as early as 1928 in Jerusalem, as it grappled with *The Christian Life and Message in Relation to Non-Christian Systems of Thought and Life*.¹⁵ In order to discuss Christian mission in the encounter with other religions and especially with the emerging ideology of secularism, the participants had to reflect on the gospel itself, the calling of the church, and the meaning of the basic claims of the Christian confession in the changing world context. The theological challenges became more explicit and demanding in the 1930’s, when Hendrik Kraemer’s *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* laid out a compelling agenda for the global discussion of Biblical authority, the confession of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and Christian witness in the

¹²W. R. Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 109, 112–113.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴Martin Kähler, *Schriften zu Christologie und Mission* [*Theologische Bücherei*, 42], München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1971, 190; see also his discussion of the locus of mission in dogmatics, 105–107.

¹⁵This was the title of vol. 1 of the Jerusalem reports: *The Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council, March 24 – April 8, 1928*, London & New York: International Missionary Council, 1928.

context of religious pluralism. A survey of the themes and discussions of global mission, as they crystallized in the regular gatherings of the International Missionary Council and later of the World Council of Churches' Commission on World Mission and Evangelism reveals that a kind of theological discourse was emerging in which mission was clearly more than a method or a strategy. We can see the growing conviction that the study of mission required serious theological engagement with the fundamental loci of the tradition. Something like a "theology of mission" was beginning to take shape.

IV. THE CONVERSATION INTENSIFIES

The emergence of mission as a theological discipline was a process that was defined, on the one hand, by the fact that the Christian church had become truly global—William Temple spoke of this "great new fact of our time" at his enthronement as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1942.¹⁶ This new fact was, of course, the result of the modern missionary movement. On the other hand, after an extended period of gradual disintegration, it was becoming clear that the long and complex project defined as western Christendom was over. Karl Barth wrote in 1935 that "Christendom in the form we have known it until now is at an end."¹⁷ The mission activity generated by the last two centuries of the Christendom project ultimately produced a theological challenge to that project. The issue that intensified the discussion between mission and theology was the question of the church. It soon became clear that the formation of new churches on the mission field could not be simply an exercise in strategy and policy. Nor was it going to prove acceptable simply to transplant western ecclesiologies to non-western settings. The concerns which arose with the formation of so-called younger churches in non-Christendom settings raised questions which led, within a few decades, to a fundamental re-casting of the theological understanding of the nature and task of the church and of its relationship with its cultural context. These theological issues were relevant not only for the new churches in the non-western world, but they became a profound concern for the old churches of the west moving from Christendom to Post-Christendom. The global Christian movement was confronted with the need to re-think and ultimately to re-work the theology of the church. Once that process began to unfold, it

¹⁶See Stephen Neill, *Christian Missions [The Pelican History of the Church, 6]*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1964, 15.

¹⁷Karl Barth, "Das Evangelium in der Gegenwart," *Theologische Existenz heute*, No. 25, München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1935, 33.

became clear that not only ecclesiology would be challenged by the mission experience; virtually all of the traditional theological loci would, in some way, be called into question.

It is risky to assign specific dates to the chapters and phases of the theological process. As far as the development of the relationship between theology and mission is concerned, however, there can be little question that the theological revolution ignited by Karl Barth, as it interacted with the global discussion of mission, would eventually substantially reshape the theology of mission. Johannes Aagard, the Danish missiologist, spoke of him as "the decisive Protestant missiologist in this generation," and David Bosch described Barth's theology of the church as a "magnificent and consistent missionary ecclesiology."¹⁸ Less than ten years after the appearance of the Romans commentary, Karl Hartenstein, the great German missiologist and strategist, published an essay entitled, "What Does the Theology of Karl Barth Have To Say to Mission?"¹⁹ In 1932, Barth addressed the Brandenburg Mission Conference in Berlin on the theme, "Theology and Mission in the Present Situation."²⁰ This address is frequently cited as the actual initiation of the theological interpretation that later came to be known as the theology of the *Missio Dei*.

In discussing the motive of mission, Barth reminded his hearers that the concept "mission" was used in the ancient church to describe the interrelations of the Trinity as a process of sending: the Father sending the Son, the Father and the Son sending the Spirit. This reference was for Barth a reason to be cautious about all human motives for mission: it has to be a matter of obedience to the "command of the Lord sounding here and now."²¹ For, and this is the crux,

The congregation, the so-called homeland church, the community of heathen Christians should recognize themselves and actively engage themselves as what they essentially are: a missionary community! They are not a mission association or society, not a group that formed itself with *the firm intention* to do mission, but a human community *called* to the act of mission.²²

¹⁸Johannes Aagard, "Some Main Trends in Modern Protestant Missiology," *Studia Theologica*, vol. 19, 1965, 238; see David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 373, 390.

¹⁹Karl Hartenstein, *Was hat die Theologie Karl Barths der Mission zu sagen?*, München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1928.

²⁰Karl Barth, "Die Theologie und die Mission in der Gegenwart," *Theologische Fragen und Antworten*, Zollikon: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1957, 100-184; my citations are from my translation of this essay.

²¹Karl Barth, "Die Theologie und die Mission," 115.

²²*Ibid.*

With this emphasis upon the missionary vocation of the church, and its linkage with the mission or sending of God, Barth gave a profound and shaping impulse to the re-orientation of western ecclesiology that was already fermenting in the mission discussion. The focus was changing from a "church centered mission . . . to a mission centered church," as David Bosch described the process.²³ By the time of the Mission Conference at Willingen, Germany, in 1952, there was a strong, global consensus that the church must be understood as essentially missionary. At the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church adopted this missiological ecclesiology in the first principle articulated in *Ad Gentes*: "The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit."²⁴

It is the widespread consensus that the "church is missionary by its very nature" that leads me to suggest that it is now appropriate to speak of "missional theology." I am very aware of the risks involved in proposing an adjectival theology; Helmut Thielicke never tired to warn us of the dangers and traps of such adjectival adventures. In view of the fact, however, that the western theological tradition has for so long completely ignored the missionary character of the church, and that since the 1930's there has been a significant course correction going on which can best be described as the merging of missiology and ecclesiology, it seems to me that there is emerging a way of doing theology that is shaped by this consensus, and that it is helpful to think about it as "missional theology." The Seminary's decision to introduce an emphasis on missional and ecumenical theology into the Theology Department may be seen, I think, as a recognition of the larger process of re-thinking and investigation promoted by the consensus of the missional character of the church.

²³David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 370.

²⁴*Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, Austin Flannery, O.P., ed., Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1975, *Ad Gentes*, 1, p. 814. It is of considerable interest that Thomas Stransky, the Roman Catholic ecumenist, reports that there was a meeting of leaders of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, led by Lesslie Newbigin, with Johannes Schütte and the other drafters of the Vatican II document on the missionary activity of the church (*Ad Gentes*) in April of 1965 at Crêt-Berard in Switzerland. The purpose of their meeting was to re-work the first draft that had been rejected by the bishops. Newbigin felt that their meeting might have had some influence on the final missional thrust of the document; Stransky is blunter: "Crêt-Berard had just as much influence on the mission document as did the delegated observers to Vatican II on the Decree on Ecumenism." Thomas Stransky, "From Mexico City to San Antonio," *International Review of Mission*, vol. LXXVIX, no. 313, January, 1990, 44f.

V. THE CASE FOR 'MISSIONAL THEOLOGY'

When Barth delivered his address to the Brandenburg Mission Conference in 1932, he used the phrase 'mission *and* theology,' to describe their relationship as he understood it. He affirmed that both endeavors shared common ground in the fact that they were activities of the church, that they were forms of confession of Jesus Christ, and that they were acts of ecclesial obedience, doing Christ's will by communicating his message. As human activities, they were risked as acts of faith, totally dependent upon God's grace to justify them. But he saw important, complementary distinctions: mission was oriented to gospel communication to the unbeliever, both inside and outside the church. (Barth developed the provocative concept of the "heathen church" in this address!) For him, theology was that activity which does "reflection on the rightness of that communicative process." It was a "corrective," the church's necessary and ongoing process of self-critique, emerging constantly out of the encounter with the church's one criterion, "the revelation that founds the church and which confronts us in its prophetic and apostolic testimony."²⁵ He warned against false distinctions, such as the attempt to define mission as the representation of Christian love while theology represents Christian faith, or mission is the work while theology is the word, or the former is life and the latter is thought.²⁶ Rather, they were differing forms of service, one directed toward the world into which the church is sent, and one directed toward the church as it seeks to understand its calling.

"Theology *and* mission" gradually evolved in the 1940's and 1950's into the language of "theology *of* mission" and "mission theology." In his presidential address to the Ghana Assembly of the International Missionary Council in 1958, John Mackay described the "apocalyptic hour" in which Christian mission found itself at that time, and made this appeal:

In such a situation, and at such a time, the question takes on new meaning: 'What is the Christian mission at this hour?' Let me attempt to answer the question. The time is clearly ripe to probe deeply into the theology of *mission*; it is no longer enough to raise questions regarding the policy of *missions*. The basic question confronts us: What does

²⁵Karl Barth, "Theologie und Mission," 102-103.

²⁶Ibid. 106.

mission—mission of any kind—mean? What does it signify to have a sense of mission?²⁷

Mackay's appeal was finding respondents, especially in the productive discussion that emerged from the Willingen meeting of the International Missionary Council in 1952. Many were asking, "What does mission mean?" There was a rapid expansion of literature in which the relationship between mission and theology was explored, and a variety of terminological options was offered.²⁸ David Bosch described this evolving relationship between mission and theology with the phrase, "From a Theology of Mission to a Missionary Theology."²⁹ When a research team of the Gospel and Our Culture Network set out to investigate the question, "If one were to do one's ecclesiology missiologically, what would it look like?" we decided to entitle our findings *Missional Church*, which we published in 1998. We did so, in part, because the other available adjectives such as "missiological" or "missionary" had their problems, and we wanted the freedom to define what we meant with this new term.³⁰

There are several models to which we can turn if we want to see what a missional theology might look like. The entire theological production of Lesslie Newbigin and John Mackay can be aptly described with this term. Missiologists in general, as I mentioned already, look to Karl Barth as a major exponent of missional theology, even though he did not use the term and, in 1932, stated the relationship with an "and:" "mission and theology." It is possible, however, to trace an intensification of the linkage between mission and theology in Barth's own process as he moved through the project of the *Church Dogmatics*. You will remember that he unfolds his ecclesiology under and in interaction with his doctrine of salvation, his soteriology. After expounding his understanding of soteriology as justification, he turns imme-

²⁷John Mackay, "The Christian Mission at this Hour," Ronald K. Orchard, ed., *The Ghana Assembly of the International Missionary Council; 28th December, 1957 to 8th January, 1958*, London: Edinburgh House Press, 1958, 104.

²⁸See, for example, Wilhelm Anderson, *Towards a Theology of Mission: A Study of the Encounter between the Missionary Enterprise and the Church and its Theology*, London: SCM Press, 1955; Georg Vicedom, *Missio Dei: Einführung in eine Theologie der Mission*, München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1958; Gerald Anderson, ed., *The Theology of the Christian Mission*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961; Charles Van Engen, *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996. He defines "mission theology" as multidisciplinary, integrative, definitional, analytical, and truthful; 17-31.

²⁹David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 492-496.

³⁰Darrell Guder, ed., et al., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998.

diately to "The Holy Spirit and the Gathering of the Christian Community."³¹ The understanding of the church which emerges is well summarized with the statement that the church's "mission is not secondary to its being; the church exists in being sent and in building up itself for the sake of its being."³² This is a succinct definition of the "missional church." The discussion of soteriology as sanctification is followed by the exposition of "The Holy Spirit and the Upbuilding of the Christian Community."³³ This leads on to his explication of soteriology as vocation, in which he lays out in detail the character of Christian being as the calling to witness. It is, then, followed by his treatment of "The Holy Spirit and the Sending of the Christian Community"—which could be translated the "mission" of the Christian community.³⁴ In his treatment of the various dimensions of the ministry of this sent community, he addresses the task of theology again, now as one of the word ministries (following the praise of God, proclamation of the gospel, instruction, evangelization, and mission). It seems to me that, by this time in Barth's project, the distinction between theology *and* mission is less compelling, and the explanation of the role of theology for the missional church would justify describing it as "missional theology." He wrote,

There would be no theology if there were not a community obligated in a special way to the witness of its word. Its central problem is posed for theology not in an empty space but by the community's ministry, and this is the problem that constitutes theology as a science next to other sciences. If one disregards its origin in the ministry of the community, then all of its problems would lose their theological character, if they had not become ephemeral already, and they would be consigned to the area of general and especially historical arts and letters . . . In the ministry of theology, the community tests all that it does on the basis of the criterion given by its commission, ultimately and finally in the light of the word of its Lord and Commissioner.³⁵

³¹Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956 (German: 1953), vol. IV, part 1, par. 61, 514-642; par. 62, 643-749.

³²Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. IV, part 1, par. 61, 725 (David Bosch's translation, *Transforming Mission*, 372).

³³Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. IV, part 2, par. 66, 499-613; par. 67, 614-726.

³⁴Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. IV, part 3, 2nd half, par. 71, 481-680; par. 72, 681-901. I am indebted to David Bosch for this insightful overview of the design of Barth's project; *Transforming Mission*, 373.

³⁵Karl Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, vol. IV, part 3, 2nd half, par. 72, 1007 (my translation; in the ET, see p. 879).

VI. THE MOTIVE, MATTER, AND MANNER OF MISSIONAL THEOLOGY

In his 1932 address, Barth focused on the way that theology *accompanied* mission in its work, raising questions about the motive, the appeal, the task, and the proclamation of mission. In the meantime, we have arrived at the broadly affirmed consensus that the church is missionary by its very nature, and we are exploring the theological implications of that consensus. If we assume that our task is aptly described as missional theology, then it seems to me that it is now appropriate to invert Barth's process and suggest that mission accompanies theology by asking questions about theology's motive, matter, and manner. Or, in slightly different terms, if the church is missionary by its very nature, *why* do we do theology, *what* do we do when we do missional theology, and *how* do we do missional theology?

The motive of missional theology is derived from the church's missional vocation. That vocation is the will and command of the church's Lord, and the formation of this community for its missional vocation is the work of the Spirit promised and sent by the Lord of Church. This is the common and pervasive message of the apostolic kerygma and its scriptural record. You shall be my witnesses; as my Father has sent me, so I send you; Go into all the world and disciple the nations; you are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that [it] may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called it out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

When mission accompanies theology, when it defines the way theology works, then it becomes the task of such missional theology to accompany and support the church in its witness by testing all that the church says and does in terms of its calling to be Christ's witness. Now, if the criterion for that process of theological testing is the self-revelation of God, the Three in One, and if that self-revelation is preserved for the continuing life and work of the church in history in the Word of God written, and if that Word of God defines the people of God as a missionary people whose task is witness, then missional theology will serve the missional church by attending to the way in which that church is formed by the scriptural testimony for its vocation. There is a hermeneutical corollary to the understanding of the essentially missional nature of the church: The scriptural testimony is to be understood as the empowered testimony that God's Spirit uses for the continuing formation of the church for its missional calling. James Brownson put it succinctly in a recent public presentation: "Early Christianity is a missionary

religion.”³⁶ The congregations founded by the first missionaries had, as their purpose, the continuation of the witness that had led to their founding. The writings that became the canonic New Testament all functioned basically as instruments for the continuing formation of these communities for the faithful fulfillment of their missional vocation. The first theological work of the church is found in the epistles and gospels that focus on the concrete situations of missional congregations and their witness—here we see the earliest instance of mission functioning as the mother of theology. This biblical formation of the church requires a missional hermeneutic that constantly asks, “How did this written testimony form and equip God’s people for their missional vocation then, and how does it do so today?” All the resources of historical, critical, and literary research on the biblical testimony can and must contribute to the church’s formation by illuminating all the dimensions of this fundamental question.³⁷ The goal of the process is the continuing formation of the church so that it “leads its life worthy of the calling with which it has been called.” (See, e.g., Eph. 4:12; 1 Thess. 2:12; Phil. 1:27).

Defining the motive of missional theology as I have done might sound like license to define in a very global way the matter, the what, of missional theology. There is a danger here, of course, of falling into the trap described by Stephen Neill’s remark, “If everything is mission, then nothing is mission.”³⁸ I frankly confess that, as far as the motive of our theological work is concerned, I would like to think as comprehensively and globally as possible. John Mackay was right when he observed at the Ghana meeting of the International Missionary Council in 1958, “The Church’s structure and doctrine, her liturgy and even her sacraments, fulfill their highest function when they prepare the people of God to be the servants of God.”³⁹ The formation of the church for mission should be the motivating force that shapes and energizes our theological labors in all their diversity and distinctiveness. The matter of missional theology will necessarily be more limited

³⁶James Brownson, Presentation at the Additional Meeting on “A Missional Approach to Teaching Bible and Theology: Breakfast Sponsored by Tyndale College (Toronto),” Sunday, November 24, 2002, AAR/SBL, Toronto; see also James Brown, *Speaking the Truth in Love: New Testament Resources for a Missional Hermeneutic*, Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1998.

³⁷For further discussion of “missional hermeneutics” see David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 15–180, and the literature cited there; Darrell Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000, 49ff., esp. 52, notes 7–9.

³⁸Stephen Neill, *Creative Tension*, London: Edinburgh House, 1959, 81.

³⁹John Mackay, “The Christian Mission at this Hour,” R. K. Orchard, ed., *The Ghana Assembly of the International Missionary Council, 28th December, 1957 to 8th January, 1958*, London: Edinburgh House Press, 1958, 121.

and selective, since it must always relate to particular contexts within time and history. It would be presumptuous for a western theologian to define the matter of missional theology for a colleague working in India, or Indonesia, or Korea, although one can and should have very stimulating conversations about our common themes of interest. Missional theology is not universal theology, but always and essentially "local," that is, working out of and in critical interaction with a particular strand of Christian tradition in a particular cultural context. For us in the North Atlantic world, the matter of missional theology has its own challenges and themes, shaped by our history and especially by the profound paradigm shift through which we are passing from Christendom into Post-Christendom. The ecumenical process, at which level the consensus of the essentially missionary nature of the church is most clearly articulated and bearing fruit, constantly calls us to account and raises questions for us as we contend with our particular story in our part of the world. But we have our own tasks to address as heirs of the Christendom legacy and resident aliens in a post-Christendom context that has become, in a very short period of time, one of the world's most difficult mission fields.

This question of the matter of missional theology also refines our understanding of its motive. For the critical and evaluative motive for the doing of theology includes within its responsibility the formation of servant leaders for the church. When we describe theology as missional, then we do imply that the work of theology is not an end in itself but is related to God's mission in the world. We focus upon the church's theology *and* the church's theologians, its teaching elders, those who are called and gifted to equip the saints for the work of ministry as the apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral, and pedagogical ministers of the Word (Eph. 4:11f.).

A consideration of the matter of missional theology in our context leads quite concretely to the curricular question. What are the theological content areas that this particular missional theologian might be expected to work on in the courses he proposes to his colleagues? How will this assumption that the church is missional by its very nature be reflected both in the area of theological research and in the classroom enterprise? As I project the work I hope to do in this area over the next years, I am compelled by the desire to be a good steward of the already well developed and provocative process of missional theology that has coalesced in the last seven decades. There is much work to be done simply carrying forward the discussions and themes that are already on the agenda. Because it is an ecumenical process, part of the challenge is to engage the diverse missional theologies of the church around the world in ways that will benefit, challenge, and hold accountable our theological research and teaching in our particular North Atlantic context.

As I have already implied, the work of a missional theologian in our context will have to focus upon the Christendom project and its disintegration. We have to ask about the impact of the Christendom project upon the missional vocation of the church in the west. We have to investigate how this fascinating and complex *corpus Christianum* has shaped our understanding of the gospel and our ways of reading and interpreting Scripture. Barth argued that there are two ways to read this legacy, critically and positively, as both a sequence of accommodations to the world for the sake of acceptance and survival, as well as a promising reflection of the incarnation, an anticipation of a world totally subject to God and His Christ.⁴⁰ It appears to me that one aspect of the critical investigation of our legacy will focus upon the compromises and reductionisms we have made in our theologies, as a result of our accession to hegemonic power and privilege in western civilization. The roots of the problem of cheap grace as Bonhoeffer defined it go back very far in our history to early accommodations: the reduction of salvation to individual savedness, the separation of the message of the kingdom of God from the proclamation of the gospel of salvation, the reduction of the church's mission to the maintenance of individuals' salvation, the reduction of general vocation to clericalism, the reduction of the sacraments to individual salvific rites.⁴¹ We must also examine the ways in which we have lost sight of the missional vocation of the early Christian movement, reflected in the distinctive kind of communities they were called to be and actually were. Our biblical scholarship will be a constant challenge to us to hear Paul's admonition that "we are to be no longer conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2).

All of the classical loci of theology are, in some way, engaged by the matter of missional theology. We have spoken of the complex interactions between soteriology and ecclesiology. Christological issues will also continue to claim the attention and discipline of the missional theologian, and will motivate explorations in partnership with systematicians, historians of doctrine, as well as social ethicists. The confession of the lordship of Christ and of the universal scope of the work of salvation has led to more than one tense encounter among Christians, and between Christians and adherents of other religions. The issues raised by such episodes are not merely matters of tactics or tact, but of fundamental theology, the discussion of which must be marked by patient, sensitive conversation with people of enormously diverse convic-

⁴⁰Karl Barth, "Das Evangelium in der Gegenwart," *Theologische Existenz heute*, no., 25, 1935, 30ff; see also Eberhard Busch, "Die Kirche am Ende ihrer Weltgeltung: Zur Deutung der Ekklesiologie Karl Barths," unpublished lecture, 1999, 2.

⁴¹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, tr. R. H. Fuller with I. Booth, New York: MacMillan, 1959, 35ff. See, on reductionism, Guder, *Continuing Conversion*, chapters 5-6.

tions. The missional theologian, working always from and for the biblical formation of the witnessing community, will be particularly attentive to the various ways in which we sinful Christians attempt to dilute or evade the scandal and foolishness of the gospel of the crucified Jesus. We will also be both patient and supportive as we encounter Christian communities in non-western cultures that have to make their way through their own version of the christological heresies that dominated our history for our first six centuries. Perhaps our history can be helpful to them; perhaps they can use our experience fruitfully as they come to their own confession of the humanity and deity of Christ. But we cannot preempt the necessary struggle with that scandal and foolishness wherever the question is rehearsed again, "Who do people say that I am?"

Also part of the christological discussion is the current focus upon issues of gospel and culture, which emerged in the 1990's as a major theme for the global discussion of missional theology. Western theologians are particularly challenged by our common tendency to look upon the Christendom legacy as somehow normative Christianity and normative Christian theology. The global church, the "great new fact of our time," will constantly demonstrate the fundamental translatability of the gospel, its powerful destigmatization of all cultures, and its concomitant relativization of all cultures—themes to which Lamin Sanneh has made us sensitive.⁴² From every such passage of gospel translation from one culture to another, the missional theologian learns, and is obligated to find ways to pass that learning along in ways helpful to the church in one's own context. With the growing emphasis upon the cultural distinctiveness of the contextualized church, there is good theological reason to pay careful attention to the catholicity of the multi-cultural church. The task that particularly must occupy the missional theologian examines how we learn to articulate and celebrate the oneness of the gospel in the great diversity of its witness. Lesslie Newbigin, as a bi-cultural missional theologian, shaped as much by India as by his British roots, is an especially important mentor for missional theology in the west, as we try to sort out the differences and interactions between the Gospel, the church, and our western cultures.⁴³

The rapid expansion of the pentecostal and charismatic communions poses questions and themes for the missional theologian. How do we understand

⁴²Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1989.

⁴³The best introduction to this aspect of Newbigin's work is George R. Hunsberger, *Bearing the Witness of the Spirit: Lesslie Newbigin's Theology of Cultural Plurality*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998.

the work of the Holy Spirit in the formation of the church? What have the old churches of the west perhaps lost with regard to the power and work of the Holy Spirit, which was present in early Christianity and is being reclaimed in the contemporary flourishing of Pentecostal churches? These are particularly important and difficult challenges for a missional theologian shaped by the Reformed tradition who certainly is alert to the significance of the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit but skeptical about certain gifts of the Spirit that are said to be requisite for sanctification! And yet there is real danger that our theological caution could lead us to miss what the Spirit is doing in the churches.

Another way to speak of the matter of missional theology in our setting would be to consider the particular conversation partners whose work is of formative importance for the church in North America. I have betrayed the names of my particular conversation partners in this enterprise in the course of this lecture: Karl Barth, David Bosch, John Mackay, and Lesslie Newbigin. These are four missional theologians whose work will undoubtedly demand attention and discipline for many years. There are, of course, many more, especially when we look over our denominational fences and engage our Roman Catholic and Orthodox brothers and sisters. But it seems to me that there is still a great deal of work to be done in order for us to derive from the work of these missional theologians all that is there that could guide, challenge, and perhaps correct us in our attempts to be faithful to the church's vocation. The formation of leadership in the area of missional theology for the next generations will develop its insights and skills to no small measure from the disciplined engagement with their work and issues.

I have spoken briefly about the motive and matter of missional theology. The term "missional" also speaks to the *manner* with which we do theology. There is an adverbial function as well as an adjectival function to the term. Here, I am thinking of the distinctive ways in which our theological work and life together share in the church's missional mandate as witness to the gospel. How do we lead our life, as a theological community, worthy of the calling with which we have been called?

The term "ecumenical" certainly addresses the manner of missional theology. The fact that the church is truly a global movement, multi-cultural, multi-lingual, and multi-structural, should result in a theological manner that is modest, aware of its limitations, and open to learning through interaction with the ecumenical church. The real art of the missional theologian is to learn how to do theology modestly and yet with conviction. John Mackay serves us as a mentor in this regard. It is fascinating to see, for instance, in his treatment of *Ecumenics: The Science of the Church Universal*, how naturally and

eloquently he moves back and forth from discussion of the "what" of our proclamation to an investigation of "how" we do it.⁴⁴ His long-standing emphasis upon the incarnational character of Christian mission ultimately bore fruit in the worldwide attention to "mission in Jesus Christ's way" that became a theme of missional conversation in the 1980's.⁴⁵

The ecumenical manner of doing missional theology will also insist on integrity in our work. It has to do with worthy living, with the character of our corporate life and the ways in which it provides evidence of the healing work of God's love, before a watching world. Another way to speak of this integrity is to emphasize the congruence of the message and the way it is communicated. Mackay spoke of this as "the incarnational principle," the enfleshing of the good news in the behavior of the community and its members. It evokes an understanding and practice of theological discipline that reflects that the gospel is about healing, shalom, reconciliation, forgiveness, and new beginnings.

Finally, it is an essential aspect of the manner of missional theology that we go about it both patiently and expectantly. It is not for us to know the *chronos* time or the *kairos* time which are solely under God's sovereignty (Acts 1:7), which is difficult for us as late moderns to accept. We are still quite sure that we are capable of organizing the kingdom, that we know the shape of heaven on earth and can bring it about with the right strategies, resources, and personnel. The manner of missional theology is one of confident waiting while carrying out the task assigned to us now: witness. One of the most urgently needed outcomes of our reclamation of the missional character of the New Testament witness is the gift of eschatological confidence: God will complete the good work God has begun in us (Phil. 1:6). Our task is to "gird up the loins of our mind, to be sober, and to set our hopes completely on the grace that will be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13). In a moment we shall recess to a setting of the advent chorale, "Savior of the Nations, Come;" that advent sense of confident expectation, which looks back with thanksgiving upon what God has done in the incarnation and the cross, which testifies that this one event is good news for all nations, and which looks forward to what God will yet most certainly do, is the manner which befits a truly missional theology. It is well described in one of the verses of this hymn: "You, the Father's only Son, have o'er sin the vict'ry won; boundless shall your kingdom be; when shall we its glories see?"

⁴⁴For one example see John Mackay, *Ecumenics*, 172-186.

⁴⁵See especially the documentation of the World Council of Churches' World Conference on Mission and Evangelism at San Antonio in 1989; *International Review of Mission*, vol. LXXVIII, nos. 311-312, July/October, 1989.

It is my hope that the presence of a conversation partner defined as a missional and ecumenical theologian at Princeton will stimulate good conversation, exploration into perhaps uncharted territory, the formulation of new and truly productive questions, and, God willing, be a modest contribution to the missional renewal of our churches for the challenges of our mission field. That General Assembly in 1830 was truly prophetic when it stated that "the spirit of the religion of Jesus Christ is essentially a spirit of Mission." (I will leave off their "s" for reasons of missional theology!) May Princeton so do its theology and train missional leaders for the church that she might "make all her establishments tributary to [this spirit's] advancement."

Science, Theology and Technology: Responsible Praxis within the Ecological Order

by CALVIN B. DEWITT

Calvin B. DeWitt is a Professor, Institute for Environmental Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the Director and CEO of the AuSable Institute of Environmental Studies, Madison, Wisconsin. He delivered this lecture at the inaugural consultation of the Abraham Kuyper Institute for Public Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary on February 2, 2002.

IN HIS INVITATION to the inaugural lectures of the Kuyper Center for Public Theology, Prof. Max Stackhouse asked the presenters to provide an overview of the contributions of their fields of study to understanding the responsibilities of technology toward the ecological order, and also to show the relevance of these contributions for understanding the character of Creation and human capacities for addressing related environmental issues that confront us. Accordingly, this paper identifies the contributions both of science and theology toward understanding the character of creation and the place of human beings with regard to creation, and it applies these scientific and theological contributions to identifying concordant principles and praxis in technology and society.

For its contributions from science this paper presents contributions of several areas of the natural sciences but particularly environmental science. For the contributions from theology this paper, in recognition of the prominent Dutch theologian whose name this inaugural honors, pays particular attention to the theology of Abraham Kuyper and the area of Reformed theology of which his is part.

Abraham Kuyper on Science. It is especially significant for the title of this inaugural paper that in his fourth Stone Lecture, Kuyper emphasizes that Reformed theology¹ “fostered *love for science*” and “restored to science *its domain*.”² Stating that “cosmical science” which originated in the Graeco-Roman world vanished in the middle ages as the sights of the church became focused on heaven, he makes the point that Reformed Christianity rehabilitated the cosmic sciences. And, after first emphasizing that he does not over-rate the classical world, he asserts that “Aristotle knew more of the cosmos than all the church-fathers taken together; that under the dominion of Islam, better cosmic science flourished than in the cathedral- and monas-

¹ Kuyper consistently uses the term “Calvinism” for which I often substitute “Reformed Christianity” in this paper.

² Abraham Kuyper. [1898] *Lectures on Calvinism: Six Lectures Delivered at Princeton University Under the Auspices of the L. P. Stone Foundation*. [Stone Lectures.] (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), p. 117.

tic-schools of Europe." Moreover he maintains that it was Reformed Christianity by its principal that "constantly urges us to go back from the Cross to Creation" and "by means of its doctrine of *common grace*, threw open again to science the vast field of the cosmos, now illumined by the Sun of Righteousness."

On account of "its love of things eternal," Kuyper claims that Christendom has "neglected to give due attention to the world of God's creation. . . . And this one-sided, inharmonious conception in the course of time has led more than one sect to a mystic worshiping of Christ alone, to the exclusion of God the Father Almighty, *Maker of heaven and earth*. Christ was conceived exclusively as the Savior, and His *cosmological* significance was lost out of sight." However this significance is affirmed by John in his gospel where "he first tells us that Christ is the 'eternal Word, by Whom all things are made, and who is the life of men.'" This is also asserted by the apostle Paul, says Kuyper, who "also testifies that 'all things were created by Christ and consist by Him'; and further, that the object of the work of redemption is not limited to the salvation of individual sinners, but extends itself to the redemption of *the world*, and to the organic reunion of all things in heaven and on earth under Christ as their original head. Christ himself does not speak only of the regeneration of the earth, but also of a regeneration of the cosmos (Matt. 19:28)." And making reference to Romans 8, Kuyper reminds us that "Paul declares: 'The whole creation groaneth waiting for the bursting forth of the glory of the children of God.'"³

And so, Kuyper, rooting himself in the testimony of the Scriptures, reminds us that "the final outcome of the future . . . is not the merely spiritual existence of saved souls, but *the restoration of the entire cosmos*, when God will be all in all under the renewed heaven on the renewed earth." And, "Certainly our salvation is of substantial weight, but it cannot be compared with the much greater weight of the glory of our God, Who has revealed His majesty in His wondrous creation. This creation is His handiwork, and being marred by sin, the way was opened, it is true for a still more glorious revelation in its restoration, yet restoration is and ever will be the salvation of that which was first created, the theodicy of the original handiwork of our God." And thus, Reformed Theology "puts an end once and for all to contempt for the world, neglect of temporal and under-valuation of cosmical things. Cosmical life has regained its worth not at the expense of things eternal, but by virtue of its capacity as God's handiwork and as a revelation of God's attributes."⁴

³ Stone Lectures, p. 118f.

⁴ Stone Lectures, pp. 117-120.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF SCIENCE

Science makes significant contributions to understanding the character of creation and human capacities for addressing related environmental issues that confront us, and also to theology.⁵ Environmental science builds a cognitive appreciation and respect for the way the world is, the way the world works in its biospheric and planetary processes, and the adverse consequences of human action on these processes. It expects that this cognitive appreciation and respect will bring people to know that they are part of the biosphere and to know how human beings can live in accord with the biosphere and its processes. It shares with the science of theology Merriam-Webster's definition of science, "the state of knowing: knowledge as distinguished from ignorance or misunderstanding."⁶ Environmental science we expect, will engage us in beholding and studying the world in which we live, and in so engaging us will help us live rightly on Earth.

1. *Earth is a Dynamic Life-Support System.* Among the contributions science has made to understanding the character of Creation is an understanding of planetary and biospheric structure, dynamics, and processes as well as the richness of the interactive and dynamic organizational character that is maintained through complex exchanges of matter, energy, and information. As for the specific dynamic lineages called *species* we have identified these in numbers that are orders of magnitude greater than were known at the time of the book of Genesis, and species new to science are still being identified daily. As for the interactions among these lineages in space and through time we know next to nothing due in large part to their sheer number which is estimated at this time to be somewhere between 5 and 50 million. As for life-sustaining material cycles, fluxes, and flows we believe we have described most of these in their broad outlines and we know them to occur throughout the biosphere from the deepest sea to high in the atmosphere and from the equator to the poles. As for cycles, we have found them to be sustaining life at every level of organization, from the Krebs cycle at the cellular level to life cycles of each of the biotic lineages at the organismic and population level, to the global-thermohaline ocean conveyor belt, to the hydrologic cycle at the

⁵ Herman Bavinck in the third of his Stone Lectures delivered at Princeton University on Revelation and Nature in 1908-1909 said, "It is often represented as if only the special science of theology concerned itself with God and divine things, and as if all the other sciences, particularly the natural sciences, have nothing whatever to do with God: nay, as if they would even forfeit their scientific character and become disloyal to their task, should they refer to him or take account of him. A chasm is thus created, objectively, in the sphere of reality. . . ." *The Philosophy of Revelation*. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1909, p. 83; reprinted Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953.

⁶ *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Tenth Edition (1993), s.v. "religion."

planetary level.⁷ As for flows, we have found them operating across a spectrum that ranges from the electron transport system in cellular metabolism to the continuing flow of energy to Earth from our star, the Sun. We have described life-sustaining fluxes that range from submicroscopic ones of ions involved in nerve cells that are vital to nerve impulses within the information transmission and processing systems of organisms to planetary fluxes at surface and atmosphere of the earth that keep Earth's temperatures within the biokinetic zone. And we have gained insight into regulatory systems that range from those that regulate gene expression in the genome to those that maintain the atmosphere at 21 per cent oxygen.

2. *Human Beings are Part of, not Apart from, this Life-Support System.* The scientific description of planetary and biospherical structure and processes of Earth have removed what few doubts we might have had about the inherent embeddedness of human beings in biospheric systems. More than providing concrete verification of human imbeddedness in these systems and our dependence on their fluxes and flows, science is making another major contribution toward understanding human capacity to manage the planet. For more than a century we have made working models of ecosystems and their fluxes and flows by attempting to create self-sustaining microcosms. Early on this took the form of "balanced" aquaria for which we attempted to provide light as the only outside input. In recent decades this has taken the form of space capsules and orbiting space laboratories. Most recently it was in the form of Biosphere 2, the self-contained 1.27 hectare glass house that became operational in 1991 and since 1994 has been operated by Columbia University. Far from giving us the confidence that we could manage planet Earth, these models taught and are teaching us that our planet, throughout the course of history has been providing and has been sustaining life on the planet through a highly integrated system of energy flows, material cycles, and dynamic lines and networks of living systems all of which work together to maintain the biosphere. We now know that as it is beyond our capacity to manage these microcosms and mesocosms it also is beyond our capacity to manage our planet. The best we can do is to work with it, bringing human actions in accord with its operations. Even the minor tests of our capacity to control a single species, such as extirpation of the killer bee in the new world and rabbits in Australia have met with failure.

3. *Every Creature Promotes what is Immediately Useful.* The highly respected biologist, Theodosius Dobzhansky, prominent for his research on the genetics and population biology of the fruit fly across the continent in the 20th century, concluded that "selection promotes what is immediately useful,

⁷ Wallace S. Broecker, "The great ocean conveyor," *Oceanography* 4(1991):79-89.

even if the change may be fatal in the long run.”⁸ This conclusion is widely accepted and has been most recently supported and addressed by the distinguished Harvard biologist, Agassiz Professor of Zoology emeritus Ernst Mayr, now in his nineties, in his recent book, *This is Biology*. He applies this principle to children, who without ethical guidance and education, indulge in their own immediate self-interest. Mayr writes, “We have just passed through a period in which exaggerated importance was placed on the so-called freedom of the child, allowing it to develop its own goodness. . . . Why? Because, one may be told, brainwashing a child is an interference with its personal freedom, or moralizing is not entertaining and therefore will not sell.” And having come to the same conclusion as Dobzhansky through decades of research, that every creature promotes what is immediately useful, he gives his readers the “seemingly old-fashioned advice to dedicate a “half an hour of ethical education a day in elementary school.” Our children need to be taught ethics; it is not part of their genes.

4. *Human Beings Tend also to Promote what is Immediately Useful*. Extending what Mayr sees as a major issue for children to the rest of the human population, Wisconsin’s biochemist and leading bioethicist, Van Rensselaer Potter identified this problem in human beings as “evolution’s fatal flaw.”⁹ Defining this fatal flaw “as the biological predilection for short-term gain” and noting that it is built into our very selves, he sees it as the primary basis for the problems of the future as these are identified by anthropologist Elwyn Simons:

The extreme novelty of humans as the dominant force on this planet is as surprising as is our current rate of destruction of our own habitat and that of the earth’s other life forms. This disregard is all the more striking since, in geological terms, our species has only recently departed from its “place in nature.” . . . In its very success, our species has raised grave problems that demand new kinds of solutions. Will we, by better understanding the processes that made us what we are, grow in capacity to solve the frightening problems of the future arising from our very selves?¹⁰

In response to recognizing this problem with our species, Potter advocates a “global bioethics” in order to further the development of a morality that will attempt to respond to the concerns of Simons and others. However, he

⁸ Theodosius Dobzhansky. “Evolution at work.” *Science* 127(1958):1091-1098, p. 1098.

⁹ Van Rensselaer Potter. “Getting to the year 3000: can global bioethics overcome evolution’s fatal flaw?” *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 34(1)(1990):89-98.

¹⁰ Elwyn L. Simons. Human origins. *Science* 245(1989):1343-1350, p. 1349.

believes that we neither have the understanding of the world that is needed nor the moral or religious stature that is required. Potter seriously doubts whether existing institutions or individuals in general have an adequate notion of what is true about the structure and processes of the biosphere and a real knowledge of the place of human beings within it. He calls for "moral responses based on continually developing the best possible understanding of the world and humankind's place in it."¹¹

Beyond the problem Mayr identifies for children for whom we already can identify a core of ethical principles they should be taught, is that the problem with the kind of ethics we need in our time is that we have not yet identified them in ways that can be taught across human society. Not to be teaching ethics is one problem, but a greater one is that for global bioethics we have not formulated what needs to be taught. And, of course, what needs to be taught will include principles that necessarily will be contrary to immediate self-interest.

5. *Human Actions Pose Serious Threat to the Biospheric Life-Support System.* In recent decades—thanks to our growing ability to observe the face of the earth across the planet by ground observations and aerial imagery, to measure and interpret what we find by visual and instrumental analysis, to store and process the information we gain, and to assemble and analyze ancient texts, historical documents, research journals and data in searchable databases—we have been able to describe and evaluate many of the consequences of human action on earth. And these include those actions that threaten, degrade, and destroy creatures and processes. Among the many things we have learned and know from environmental science are that human beings have desertified the fertile lands of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, generated large-scale starvation through mono-culture of potatoes in Ireland, produced air degradation and associated large-scale lethal lung disorders across London in the early days of industrialization, extinguished the Passenger Pigeon, transformed Indiana's Calumet River into an industrial drain, produced millions of deaths to lung cancer through cigarette smoke, transformed benign creatures into devastating pests, degraded the flood buffering capacity of the Mississippi River, destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan with atomic bombs, and destroyed the rice production capacity of the Mekong Delta with herbicides. Some of these degrading actions of human beings are done

¹¹ Potter, pp. 89-90, and personal communication, May 2001. Also see George E. P. Box, 1993. Changing management policy to improve quality and productivity. Report No. 108, 4 pp. Center for Quality and Productivity Improvement, University of Wisconsin, p. 3.

deliberately, others not. Some are consequences of our not caring for the contexts of our enterprise and still others are consequences of intentional ignorance, of innocence, and of what we believed to be military necessities.

The broad categories of these actions include alteration of energy between Earth and the Sun, land degradation, deforestation, species extinctions, environmental toxification, water degradation, and human and cultural degradation.

6. *Environmental Science Seeks to Provide the Knowledge of Biospheric Processes.* As the natural science that works to understand how the biosphere and biophysical systems of the planet work, environmental science, focuses on meeting the need to address the environmental problems and issues that first became widely known following publication of *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson in 1962.¹² G. Tyler Miller, Jr., a chemist at St. Andrews Presbyterian College has been a principal definer of the content of this field through nine successive editions of his *Environmental Science: Working with the Earth*, twelve successive editions of *Living In The Environment: Principles, Connections, and Solutions*, and five successive editions of *Sustaining the Earth*. From this and numerous textbooks by other authors, we have come to recognize clearly that this is a problem-based field.

Environmental science also is a field that is strongly related to values and ethics.¹³ Investigation of the contents of environmental science textbooks finds that nearly every part has an underlying ethic, either explicit or implicit. This is reflected in topics such as planetary energy exchange and climate, renewable and nonrenewable resources, soil formation and erosion, biotic species diversity and extinction, forest processes and deforestation, water

¹² Rachel Carson. *Silent Spring* [1962] 1994. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.

¹³ Here is something like I usually say at the beginning of my course: People, if you open your textbook for this course in Environmental Science and check out the headings of each section, you will find that nearly every one has an underlying ethical concern. This is not your usual textbook in natural science. Its author has little interest in having you know the characteristics of endangered species or about the various ways to quantify the rising levels of pollutants in a stream. On the contrary, its author is ethically concerned with the loss of biodiversity and the toxification of the world. The author is asking you the question, "Is it right that we diminish the variety of species on earth? Is it right that we poison the environments of ourselves and other creatures?" You know his personal answer clearly from the way he writes. His answer is "no!" The subject matter of courses in environmental science is ethically-derived. Nearly every topic is undergirded with an unstated ethic. And taken together these constitute an ethics that is widely held by practicing environmental scientists. What is this ethics? It is that human beings should live on earth in ways that respect the way the world is, that people should not adversely alter the systems and workings of the world that sustain us and all the other creatures. It is an ethics not expressly articulated and yet an ethics that operates as some kind of cosmic demand—a demand that we live rightly on earth, a demand that we do what is right for the earth and everything in it, for the biosphere and all that it contains.

balance and desertification, water use and seawater intrusion, and atmospheric circulations and pollution.

7. *Environmental Science Instills Awe and Wonder and Seeks Promotion of "Earth Citizenship."* Environmental science, is a field strongly related to values and ethics. The understanding of planetary and biospheric structure, dynamics, and processes that comes from environmental science and appreciation of the richness of the interactive and dynamic organizational character of the Earth, maintained through complex exchanges of matter, energy, and information, instills awe and wonder for the world that inspires people to seek to live rightly on the Earth. This awe, wonder, and appreciation for the Earth leads people to seek the means to live in accord with it. Environmental science helps people to work to live ethically, in accord with principles and practices that will achieve and spread right living.

Mary Midgely takes this respect for the biosphere further in her treatment of what she calls "the reverent scientist." For the scientist there is a faith, she observes, that acts not merely on self-interest or future rewards. Instead it involves emotions of "awe, veneration, a sense of vastness and mystery" and

much of the appeal to self-interest is of the more indirect kind which offers prestige by association with this cosmic vastness. Reverence for the thing studied is perhaps even a necessary part of the scientific spirit, one with a strong tendency to generate parallels with religion. Today this is a rather surprising matter, and there are certainly plenty of scientists who dislike this kind of suggestion and would declare war on the whole notion of revering anything. Others insist that, merely because our relation to the universe is that of tiny part to whole, our study of it cannot but be a reverent one.

Midgely adds further reflections by Theodosius Dobzhansky in 1967:

Man's conscience, the existence of life, and indeed of the universe itself, all are parts of the *mysterium tremendum*. . . . there is no more succinct, and at the same time accurate, statement of the distinctive quality of human nature than that of Dostoevsky; 'man needs the unfathomable and the infinite just as much as he does the small planet which he inhabits.' . . . [I]n every known human society . . . peoples have arrived at some system of religious views concerning the meaning and the proper conduct of their lives [R]eligion enables human beings to make peace with themselves and with the formidable and mysterious universe into which they are flung by some power greater than themselves.

And she observes that Dobzhansky "is the kind of scientist who emphasizes the inevitable slightness of the whole scientific achievement and its absurd disproportion to the vastness of what there is to be known."¹⁴

C. Wayne Booth helps us deal with the awe and wonder that develops within scientists and others who delve deeply into the workings of the biosphere and work to understand its overwhelmingly great diversity of interrelated creatures, by proving us with a fresh and vibrant definition of religion.

Religion is the passion, or the desire, both to live right—not just to live but to live *right*—and to *spread* right living, both desires *conceived as responses* to some sort of cosmic demand—that is, to a demand made to us by the *way things are*, by the way the world is, by the nature of Nature (as some would say) or by God himself (as explicitly religious people put it).¹⁵

By affirming the inescapable situation of human beings within the biosphere rather than over and above it, by incorporating the human causes of environmental issues and problems into its cognitive core, by describing the necessity of right living that is respectful and supportive of the dynamic processes that sustain the biosphere, and by describing the necessity for spreading right living by human beings throughout the biosphere, environmental science helps people individually and corporately to shape a life system directed at choosing and shaping their actions in the world to live sustainably with the rest of the creation of which they are part. Environmental science therefore readily elicits the development of the broader interdisciplinary field of environmental studies with which it helps shape and affect the institutions that inform human endeavor in all of its many forms. The fields of environmental science and environmental studies join with ecology to help bring an ecological world-and-life view to individuals, households, religions, governments, professions, industries, and business.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS ON THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF SCIENCE

Earth is a solar-powered dynamic life-support system that sustains a fabric of living things that, interactively with the physical world, maintains the

¹⁴ Mary Midgley. "Evolution as a Religion: A comparison of Prophecies." *Zygon: Journal of Science and Religion*. 22(2)(1987):179-194.

¹⁵ This is Booth's restatement of Ernest Hocking: "If, to agree on a name we were to characterize the deepest impulse in us as a 'will to live,' religion also could be called a will to live, but with an accent on solicitude—an ambition to do one's living well. Or, more adequately, *religion is a passion for righteousness, and for the spread of righteousness, conceived as a cosmic demand.*" C. W. Booth, "Systematic Wonder: The Rhetoric of Secular Religions." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53(1984):677-702.

gaseous composition of the atmosphere, transforms and transfers energy, maintain flows and cyclings of materials, and maintains global temperatures within the biokinetic zone. Evaluation of environmental science finds it to be a problem-oriented and ethically-based science that places human beings within, and not apart from, creation and finds it necessary for human society and technology to work in full concord with the life-sustaining processes of the biosphere. The contributions of science can be summarized as follows:

1. Earth is a dynamic life-support system in which living organisms interact with non-living components to maintain the planet's atmosphere, land, and waters by means of homeostatic systems that sustain a biosphere of tens of millions of interdependent species. The ecological order of Earth is the biophysical system through which come energy processing and transfers, the breath of life for all creatures, materials processing and cycling, production of the lineages of the creatures, and a myriad of other life-sustaining services.
2. Human beings are within, and not apart from, this life support system. Every breath we take reminds us of this fact, and holding our breath reminds us even more. Human beings and other creatures all are empowered by the Sun, the star that energizes Earth.
3. Every creature on earth promotes what is immediately useful, even if fatal to that creature in the long run, and by doing this together with all creatures great and small, contributes to a sustainable biosphere.
4. Human beings tend also to promote what is immediately useful, even if fatal in the long run, and even when gifted with the capacity to know their actions and the consequences of their actions in the past, present, and future.
5. Human actions in the world pose serious threats to this life-support system locally, regionally, and globally. The broad categories of these actions include alteration of energy between Earth and the Sun, land degradation, deforestation, species extinctions, environmental toxification, water degradation, and human and cultural degradation.
6. As an ethically-based and practically-based science, environmental science seeks to provide the knowledge base necessary to inform and promote actions in personal, governmental, corporate, business, industrial, and technological work and life that are in full concord with maintaining the biophysical complexity and order of the biosphere and its life-sustaining processes.
7. As an interdisciplinary science, environmental science seeks to provide the knowledge base for understanding the Earth and its biosphere as a wonderful complex millions of species mutually shaping themselves and their

biophysical world with sufficient detail of the complexities and beauty of the Earth to promote the humility, awe, and wonder that protects us from thinking we have made and control this marvelous Earth, and directs not to lordship above the biosphere but citizenship within it.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THEOLOGY

If we follow Merriam-Webster's dictionary to define the discipline of theology as "the study of religious faith, practice, and experience; *especially* : the study of God and of God's relation to the world"¹⁶ then we necessarily must expect that theology will have something to contribute to the understanding of the character of creation and also to science. Theology we expect, will engage us in beholding and studying "the beautiful book" in order to make us ponder God's power and divinity. And, if we find the work of Abraham Kuyper appropriate to our situation we will might well view theology as applying to all of life. This is one sense in which theology can be public theology.¹⁷

Out of respect to the inaugural of the Kuyper Center for Public Theology, I use Abraham Kuyper here as my starting point. As a pastor, publishing theologian, founder of the Free University of Amsterdam, popular writer, political leader, and prime minister, Kuyper provides an example from Holland in the early 20th century on how an integrative world-and-life view can be applied to human action in the world and how such a view can deal with ecology, theology and technology to achieve responsible praxis within the ecological order in the 21st Century. Kuyper's core conviction in this regard, as explicated in his Stone Lectures delivered at Princeton in 1898, was that "not only *the church*, but also *the world* belongs to God and in both has to be investigated the masterpiece of the supreme Architect and Artificer."¹⁸

1. *The World is God's Creation and Reflects Divine Order and Integrity.* As a concept, the idea of *Creation* is long-standing. Stemming from earliest written texts, it is a concept that puts human beings into their place, *in* Creation among the other creatures. It does not allow people to conceive of themselves as apart from the world. It does not allow us to see ourselves separate from Creation. It does not permit a division between human beings and "the environment." And as for the question we oftentimes hear in our day, "What is more important? People or the environment?" it disallows it, for it is

¹⁶ Merriam-Webster's *Collegiate Dictionary*, Tenth Edition (1993), s.v. "religion."

¹⁷ See "Distillates from a Christian Cultural Matrix" in DeWitt, "Behemoth and Batrachians in the Eye of God: Responsibility to Other Kinds in Biblical Perspective," in Hessel, Dieter T. & Rosemary Radford Ruether, eds. *Christianity & Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth & Humans*, Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2000, pp. 291-316.

¹⁸ Stone Lectures, 125

meaningless. This currently popular question misinterprets people and the world; it misunderstands Creation; it "misses the mark."

In the earliest biblical texts this unity of people in Creation is powerfully presented. And because these have come down to the present day as basic texts for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam the concept of Creation is very much a part of these major world religions and also of contemporary society. In the Pentateuch (for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) and the Hebrew Bible (for Judaism and Christianity) there is no capacity for making reference to "the Creation" as some kind of "thing" since no Hebrew noun apparently existed for this concept. While God's action of creating is referenced by the verb for create (*bereshith*) as in Genesis 1:1, the corresponding noun is absent throughout the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). In the biblical view of the biophysical world there is nothing else, and thus there also no need to give it a label. Even in the subsequent Christian canon, the New Testament, extremely limited use is made of the Greek noun for Creation. It is used for example in Romans 8 where we read that the whole Creation (*ktisis*) groans; but its use is so limited in its reference to the whole of God's created works that it also gives force to an integral concept of human beings that embraces human beings.¹⁹ In the biblical worldview, therefore (Pentateuch, Hebrew Bible, and New Testament) there is no setting apart of *Homo sapiens* from Creation; human beings are creatures.

There is a psalm put to music in the Psalter Hymnal that accords the Creator all glory, strength, and dominion throughout all Creation, "And through all Creation, His wonderful temple, All things He has fashioned His glory declare." In the biblical view, God's temple is all Creation which also is the theater of God's glory. Human worth-ship, human worship, is public and all of Creation is God's temple. It is therefor a public temple, a published temple, a grand publication. Public worship is a reflected, mirrored response that publishes in lives and landscapes.

And as for worship, so with theology. The Belgic Confession reminds us by what means God is made known to us:

We know him by two means:

First, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe;
which is before our eyes
as a most elegant book,
wherein all creatures,
great and small,

¹⁹ In the KJV and NAS *ktisis* is used but 16 times and of these it refers to the whole of creation in no more than 5 places (Mark 10:16; Mark 13:19; Romans 8:19,20,21,22; 2 Peter 3:4; and Revelation 3:14).

are as so many characters
leading us to see clearly
the invisible things of God,
even his everlasting power
and divinity,
as the apostle Paul says (Romans 1:20).

All which things are sufficient to convince men
and leave them without excuse.

Second, He makes Himself
more clearly and fully known to us
by his Holy and divine Word,
that is to say, as far as is necessary for us
to know in this life,
to His glory
and our salvation.

2. *Human Beings are a Part, and not Apart from, God's Creation.* The biblical view of people is that they are part and parcel of Creation, integral beings who live and move and have their being through the gift of God's grace supplied through the gifts of God's Creation—nourished within God's gift of the ecological order of which they are part. And yet, human beings also are blessed with the divine image that gives them the capacity to image God's love for the world with their own. Human beings, made in the image of God, are created with the full capacity of mirroring God's love for the world's ecological order. As imagers of God they also "tend the garden" and participate with their Creator in caring for the created world. John Calvin, whose theology is the focus of Kuyper's Stone Lectures, describes this tending based upon Genesis 2:15, the literal reading of which is "And Jehovah God taketh the man and causeth him to rest in the garden of Eden, to serve it and to keep it."²⁰ Commenting on this passage in 1554, John Calvin wrote:

The custody of the garden was given in charge to Adam, to show that we possess the things which God has committed to our hands, on the condition, that being content with the frugal and moderate use of them, we should take care of what shall remain. Let him who possesses a field, so partake of its yearly fruits, that he may not suffer the ground to be injured by his negligence; but let him endeavour to hand it down to posterity as he received it, or even better cultivated. Let him so feed on

²⁰ *Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible: A Revised Edition*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953).

its fruits, that he neither dissipates it by luxury, nor permits [it] to be marred or ruined by neglect. Moreover, that this economy, and this diligence, with respect to those good things which God has given us to enjoy, may flourish among us; let everyone regard himself as the steward of God in all things which he possesses. Then he will neither conduct himself dissolutely, nor corrupt by abuse those things which God requires to be preserved.

By the phrase "this economy" Calvin is referring to:

- a. Our contentment with the frugal and moderate use of the things God has committed to our hands.
- b. Our care for what we do not ourselves use.
- c. Our taking of the fruits of a field without letting the ground suffer through our negligence.
- d. Our handing down our land to posterity as good or better cultivated than we received it.
- e. Our feeding on its fruits in a manner that neither dissipates it by luxury nor permits it to be marred or ruined by neglect.

By the term "custody"²¹ Calvin interprets dominion to mean a responsible care and keeping that does not neglect, injure, abuse, degrade, dissipate, corrupt, mar, or ruin the earth.²² God's economy, "God's plan or system for government of the world,"²³ is always the context and framework within which the human economy works.²⁴ The human place and role in creation, therefore is integral to creation's economy, integral to creation's ecological order. The biblical idea of economy, expressed in Genesis 2:15, involves human beings serving and keeping Creation, not oppressing it through domination. The role of human beings involves working out their economy within God's economy for Creation, serving and keeping the garden, cultivating society as part of God's Creation, seeking and preserving truth,²⁵ building civilized societies, and praying not only in words but also in

²¹ "Custody" is from the Latin *custodia*, meaning "guarding, keeping" according to Webster's Unabridged Dictionary (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged*, Springfield, Mass.: Merriam Webster, 1981), 559.

²² This teaching is strongly reinforced by Revelation 11:18, "The time has come for destroying those who . . . destroy the earth."

²³ This definition, interestingly, is the first definition of "economy" in Webster's, 720.

²⁴ This material is taken from my Kuyper Lecture delivered at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif., Oct. 1 - Nov. 1, 1996 and published in Calvin B. DeWitt, *Caring for Creation: Responsible Stewardship of God's Handiwork* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), p. 31-32.

²⁵ See for example, Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Trmth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Centmy England*. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press), xv-xxiii., 126-192, 409-417.

deeds "Thy will be done on earth."²⁶ Calvin's commentary on Genesis 2:15 makes it clear that the question is not whether there should be a human economy, but rather which of the two economies—the human economy, or God's economy—should be a subset of the other.

Deeply rooted in biblical theology, and committed to his belief that the whole world should be affected by the transforming power of the Gospel, Abraham Kuyper helped many to understand the place and role of human beings in creation. The world is our proper place and we are to do our part, with full energy and vigor, to repair and renew this world which we have upset and broken. It is our privilege to image and to honor God in caring for his world, polishing it to new luster.²⁷ In his world-and-life view, both human beings and the ecological order are to be greatly respected; every human being is honored "for the sake of his likeness to the Divine image" and the ecological order is honored "as a Divine Creation." Affirming the world he wrote, "Henceforth the curse should no longer rest upon the world itself, but upon that which is sinful in it, and instead of monastic flight from the world the duty is now emphasized of serving in the world, in every position in life."²⁸

3. *God's Son Creates all Things; God's Spirit Sustains all Things with the Breath of Life.* God's Son, the Logos, creates all things and holds all things together,²⁹ and God's Spirit sustains the ecological order of the biosphere by infusing every creature with the breath of life and empowering human beings to live to the glory of God. And on the human level, the incarnate Son adopts our human nature and the Spirit enters people, inspiring them to glorify God.³⁰ This is confessed in the Nicene Creed, where Jesus Christ is identi-

²⁶ See Richard Mouw, *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1992)

²⁷ See Kuyper, "So God Loved the World!" in *Keep Thy Solemn Feasts: Meditations by Abraham Kuyper*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1928), pp. 70-71.

²⁸ Stone Lectures, 30.

²⁹ Colossians 1:15-20.

³⁰ Abraham Kuyper puts it this way: "First, God has so created human nature that without the Holy Spirit it can not have any virtue or holiness. Adam's original, righteousness was the work and fruit of the Holy Spirit as truly as the new life in the regenerate is to-day. The shining-in of the Holy Spirit is as essential to holiness as the shining of light into the eye is essential to seeing. Second, the work of the Son according to the distinction of three divine Persons is other than the work of the Holy Spirit with reference to the human nature. The Holy Spirit could not become flesh; this the Son alone could do. The Father has not delivered all things to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works from the Son but the Son depends upon the Holy Spirit for the application of redemption to individuals. The Son adopts our nature, thus relating Himself with the whole race; but the Holy Spirit alone can so enter into individual souls as to glorify the Son in the children of God. Applying these two principles to the Person of Christ, we see that His human nature could not dispense with the constant inshining of the Holy Spirit. For which reason Scripture declares: 'He gave Him the Spirit without measure.' Nor could the Son according to His own nature take the place of the Holy Spirit; but in the divine economy, by virtue of His

fied as the one "by whom all things were made" and the Holy Spirit is identified as "the Lord and Giver of Life."³¹

4. *God Enables People to Temper Self-Interest and Seek Integrity of Creation.* We know from our observations of the world through history that the human economy does not always fit in with creation's economy. Degradation of earth and society is an unfortunate part of human history, however. This is detailed in Genesis 1 through 11, is addressed through the cleansing by the biblical flood (Genesis 6-9) and culminates with the coming of Jesus Christ who "makes all things new" (*kainos*).³² God's love for the world brings the flood. God's love for the world sends Jesus Christ into the world. God's love for the world is not for the degradation that people have brought to the world, but for the world as God intended and intends it to be. In commenting on the love passage of John 3:16, Kuyper writes:

God so loved the world, that he gave it his only-begotten Son . . . God loves *the world*. Of course not in its sinful strivings and unholy thrashings-about. . . . But God loves the world for the sake of its origin; because God has thought it out; because God has created it; because God has *maintained* it and *maintains* it to this day. We have not made the world, and thus in our sin we have not maltreated an art product of our own. No, that world was the contrivance, the work and the creation *of the Lord our God*. It was and is his world, which belonged to him, which he had created for His glory, and for which we with that world were by Him appointed. It did not belong to us, but to him. It was his. And *his* divine world we have spoiled and corrupted.

And in this is rooted God's love, that He will repair and renew this world, his own creation, his own work of wisdom, his own work of art, which we have upset and broken, and polish it again to new lustre. And it *shall* come to this. God's plan does not miscarry, and with divine certainty he carries out the counsel of his thoughts. On[e day] that world in a new earth and a new heaven shall stand before God in full glory.

But the children of human beings meanwhile can fall out of that world. If they will not cease to corrupt his world, God can declare them unworthy of having any longer part in that world. . . . And therefore whoever would

union with the human nature ever depended upon the Holy Spirit." Abraham Kuyper [1900] *The Work of the Holy Spirit*. Translated by Henri De Vries. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1946). Volume 1, 102-103.

³¹ The Nicene Creed is available in Philip Schaff, ed. *The Creeds of Christendom*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1931).

³² 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Revelation 21:5.

be saved with that world, as God loves it, let him accept the Son, whom God has given to that world, in order to save the world.³³

5. *Yet, People are Prone to Promote Religiously what is Contrary to Creation's Integrity.* Even with this tempering capacity, however, people often do what they put their mind to do, often yielding to the inherent drive to promote what is immediately useful at the expense of creation and Earth's life-support system and defending what they do religiously.

As science helps us understand the human place and role in creation, so does theology. From the study of ourselves in the present and through history, we know that we have within us the capabilities both for living in accord with the laws and ordinances that govern human society and that govern the natural world. Kuyper's theme of "common grace" in his life and work is developed by him to explain the good we see accomplished by people in the world. Every human being is enabled to appreciate the ecological order of things and to live in accord not only with human law but also within creation's ecological order. This, according to Kuyper, is the gift that God gives to all humankind.

We also know however, from the study of ourselves in the present and the past that we human beings have the capacities, and even the inclination, to work against these laws and ordinances both in society and in creation. We find ourselves sometimes bringing about conditions that degrade and even threaten the integrity of the biosphere upon which we and other life depends. This might be done out of ignorance, arrogance, or greed, as we all know too well. At the time of this writing, for example, the energy corporation Enron and its accounting firm, Arthur Andersen, are capturing the news for the arrogance and greed that is so vividly apparent in their collapse and bankruptcy. Greed is the term we apply to our (1) seeking first our own gain; (2) adapting our belief systems to our own self-interest; (3) and cultivating a mind-set that emphasizes winning over against cooperating. There is for all of us not only the gift of "common grace" but also the apparently inherent drive to out-compete our competitors in what at times has been described, ecologically speaking, as a "struggle for existence." This drive is shared widely with other creatures, but coupled with our human capacities for planning and buying goods and service well into the future beyond "our daily bread" this drive must be constrained by our ethics. We find from looking at

³³ Translation from the Dutch: Chapter 7. In: "Vier Uwe Vierdagen (Nahum 1:15). Meditatiën van Dr. A. Kuijper. Amsterdam: Höveker & Wormser, pp. 56-57, based upon a translation by John Hendrik deVries from the Dutch and published in the book, *Keep Thy Solemn Feasts: Meditations by Abraham Kuyper*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1928), pp. 70-71.

ourselves, that our "natural tendencies" to supercede God and our neighbor need to be constrained to the ultimate benefit of ourselves and human society.

Land ethicist and scientist, Aldo Leopold writes that, "An ethic, ecologically, is a limitation on freedom of action in the struggle for existence."³⁴ In stating this, in the context of his famous essay, "The Land Ethic," Leopold is extending the ethical constraints that operate on the personal level to biotic communities and ecosystems. At the personal level as well as at the ecosystem level, he would say that an ethic is a limitation on human freedom of action in the struggle for existence. With an ethical limitation, for example as given by the biblical Ten Commandments, what we might call "Darwinian behavior" is constrained. Without it, however, we often observe the emergence of oppression of the weak by the strong, declaration of one race or individual human being as superior to others, and arrogation of the people by the powerful. In this scriptures the prevalence of this behavior is affirmed, as in Psalm 37, with the assurance that ultimately the meek shall inherit the earth.³⁵

6. *God Blesses Those Who Seek Wisdom and Knowledge to Apply it.* A major contribution of theology to understanding the human place and role in creation is its identification of the human problem of embracing a too restricted view of themselves spatially and temporally. The problem that gets the human race into trouble in creation is that the world is likely to have spatial borders that tend to stop at the boundaries of one's self that connect only to the world as we can see it from self, and that the world has temporal borders that confine the self largely to the present with only faint realization of a generation or so prior and after our being here. Theology, and particularly biblical theology, counters this spatial and temporal implosiveness of the self and directs it outward to consider the cosmos and eternity. While this counterforce of self-implosion does run the risk of developing an other-worldliness it nonetheless puts us as individuals and society in grand spatial and temporal context. By so doing, it also helps us address the problem of our responding only to the here and now as we live and work in the world. What this contributes to our well-being and also the well-being of creation is that we are enabled to go beyond what is immediately present and useful to embrace the wider creation and many generations of life on earth, even enabling us to consider the universe and eternity. This world-and-life view, informed by theology, can be enabled within society toward sustaining flourishing life on earth for our species and for all of creation. And, to assure that the needs of immediate

³⁴ Aldo Leopold. *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. 202.

³⁵ Psalm 37:11; Matthew 5:5.

place and space do not overwhelm us we can establish colleges, universities, and seminaries whose professors, in their prophetic role as describers of the present, past and future, as heralds of creatures great (such as the biosphere) and small (such as sulfur bacteria), keep us and our society from destroying the earth.³⁶

God blesses human beings who humbly seek wisdom and knowledge and who apply these with love to inform human actions in society and in the wider creation (cf. 2 Chronicles 1:10-12; Proverbs 2:3), and do not hurt or destroy (Isaiah 11:9), warning those who do otherwise (including confusing knowledge) and those who are perverted by cunning and cleverness to arrogance (Isaiah 47:10) that they will perish (Hosea 4:6 - perish for lack of knowledge). Rev. Clifford Bajema, a contemporary pastor in the Reformed tradition, put it this way in a recent sermon:

Stewardship of God's creation and charity with creation's goods is more important to the meek than a controlling and selfish ownership. The meek are often those actually dispossessed, who, for reasons of faith prefer the role of serf over the fight for turf. The meek do not separate capital gain from capital gift. Profits and losses are not their ultimate concern because they know by Christ's promises that God has prepared a new earth and a holy city, called the New Jerusalem, to come down out of heaven and be their home with Him.

Think for a moment of Christ's sensible logic in linking meekness with inheritance of the earth. Since the quality of meekness is restrained power, channeled energy and disciplined effort, this must mean that care of the creation, conservation of natural resources, and discipline in the earth's development are likely sisters of meekness. And that is why the meek will inherit the earth!

Yes, it is a good thing the meek will inherit the earth, for they will hug, indiscriminately, forests and pandas and wetlands and unborn children and senile septuagenarians! They will love the least of these! Without the meek in control in the kingdom of the heavens, the new creation would not be very safe. It would not be very new either—just the same old power-controlled earth, still lamenting its travail, waiting for the meek children of God to be revealed.³⁷

³⁶ See my discussion of prophets, ancient and modern, in Chapter 3, "Spiritual and Religious Perspectives of Creation and Scientific Understanding of Nature" in Steven R. Kellert and T. J. Farnham, eds., *The Good in Nature and Humanity: Connecting Science, Religion, and Spirituality with the Natural World* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2002, in press).

³⁷ Clifford Bajema, from a sermon entitled, "Blessed are the Meek," delivered at Geneva Campus Church, Madison Campus Church, January, 2002.

7. *Theology Seeks to Inspire People to Image God's Love for the World as Earth-Keepers.* As an all-embracing science, theology seeks to join scientific knowledge of the Earth and its biosphere with knowledge of ourselves under the eye of our Creator to inspire and to bring human beings to live rightly on Earth, not as lords, but imaging the Lord's love for the world, becoming conformed to the image of God's Son.

The context of this "biospheric" or "ecumenical" economics is the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) in which "one is free to leave one's best interest in God's hands and to respond to others out of love rather than self-interest."³⁸ The answer of agroecologist Wes Jackson to a question by essayist Wendell Berry illustrates this inspiration. Asked about what kind of economy would be comprehensive enough to prevent the ruination of farmland, Wes replied, "The Kingdom of God." This inspiration went well beyond the bounds of Christendom to affect Mahatma Ghandi. In an talk to the Economic Society at Allahabad University, India in 1916 he told his audience he had read the most basic book on economics: the New Testament, and then paraphrased Matthew 6:33, "Let us seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and the irrevocable promise is that everything will be added to us." Saying that "These are real economics" he told his audience, "May you and I treasure them and enforce them in our daily lives."³⁹ This theological and biblical teaching not only affected India but has affected people across the world as a major ethical teaching that tempers self-interest and promotion of what is immediately useful toward the furtherance of integrity in the longer run.

The teaching of Matthew 5-7 is summed up in many respects by the word and concept of *stewardship*—caring for something on behalf of its owner. In the biblical view, the *ge* (Earth) is the Lord's and everything in it. Thus, so is the *oikomene* (biosphere) and all the creatures that live in it, stewardship of creation is done in behalf of its Maker. Stewardship, in theological and biblical perspective is *oikonomia*, the responsible living and working of human beings within God's *oikomene*.⁴⁰

³⁸ Robert A. Guelich. In: Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, eds. *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 689.

³⁹ Mahatma Ghandi, 1916. In the inaugural speech of H. E. Sri Krishna Kant, "Caste, Community, Conversion," at the conference on "Main Streaming the Church for Nation Building," National Council of Churches of India, Hyderabad on 6.7.91. Copy from Job Ebenezer, Director, Environmental Stewardship Office, ELCA, 8765 Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631, USA.

⁴⁰ I use the word *biosphere* here as the equivalent of the biblical Greek word, *oikomene*. For Psalm 24:1 in the Old Testament we read that the *eretz* is the Lord's and the fullness there of, the *tebel* and all that dwell therein. The Septuagint translates these Hebrew words into Greek as *ge* and *oikomene*. The New Testament uses the same Greek words, *ge* and *oikomene*.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS ON THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THEOLOGY.

Evaluation of theology finds it to be an all-embracing science that places human beings within, and not apart from, creation and finds it necessary for human society and technology to work responsively and responsibly in accord with God's establishing a well-ordered creation whose continuing ecological order manifests God's love for the world. Theology also is necessarily a public theology in the biblical world-and-life view advocated by Abraham Kuyper a century ago that ought to inform all aspects of life and work, including responsible human action in the world.

A point-by-point comparison of the summary from science and the theological themes presented above shows the remarkable complementarity between these two fields. In the sense that *complement* means "to make whole, to fulfill, to complete" and that *to complement* means "to make complete or perfect, to supply what is wanting,"⁴¹ theology and science in many ways complement each other and are complements one to the other. Taken together, in complementary fashion, they have much to contribute toward what is necessary for human beings, individually and corporately, to be doing in society and technology. How then do we put what we gain from science and theology, and the complementarity of science and theology, to practical use?

1. We must know where we are; we must know ourselves; we must know how we are going about our business. While there are good signs here and there that we "have it together," the serious problem of dualism between human beings and "the environment" addressed above largely remains. It is captured by Thomas Gladwin and his colleagues in a paper from a special topic forum on ecologically sustainable organizations in *The Academy of Management Review*. In the abstract of their paper they write:

Modern management theory is constricted by a fractured epistemology, which separates humanity from nature and truth from morality. Reintegration is necessary if organizational science is to support ecologically and socially sustainable development.

And they make the case for an approach to management "as if sustainability, extended community, and our Academy mattered."⁴²

2. We must gain sufficient knowledge of the highly complex transfer, cycling, and homeostatic processes of the biosphere that maintain its tens of

⁴¹ *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "complement."

⁴² Thomas N. Gladwin, James J. Kennelly, and Tara-Shelomith Krause. "Shifting Paradigms for Sustainable Development: Implications for Management Theory and Research." *The Academy of Management Review*, 20, n. 4. (Oct., 1995), pp. 874-907.

millions of species under an atmosphere of regulated gaseous composition in a fabric of multifaceted system-sustaining interactions that we will recognize that for all of our impacts and influences, human beings do not run the Earth and the biosphere, neither are human beings capable of doing so.

3. We must gain sufficient knowledge of ourselves as organisms totally dependent upon this miraculous biosphere that we see the need, not to control the Earth, but to control ourselves, and then proceed to put that knowledge into practice.
4. In controlling ourselves, we must learn to temper our predilection for doing what is immediately useful, seeking first sustained biospheric integrity or as many religious people would put it, the Kingdom of God, through ethical education of our children, ourselves, and our society on the things that matter most in the wider world and in the long run.
5. Our putting of this knowledge into practice is an activity of the greatest humility while also being an activity of the greatest responsibility to ourselves, to other creatures, to the biosphere, and to the Creator of this wonderful Earth.

Human praxis in technology and society, as praxis in greatest humility and greatest responsibility must deal with our selves and the biosphere in ways similar to humble and responsible physicians who understand that they themselves do not heal but help establish the conditions for healing; and in ways similar to humble and responsible public health scientists seek to identify dis-ease at its very start and move preventively to averting catastrophe; and in ways that humble and responsible nutritionists so take care of living beings and communities that the seeds of dis-ease are never planted; and in ways that humble and responsible scientists find and make known the poisonous and toxic nature of materials we are about to put into soil, water, and air to the detriment of us, other creatures, and biospheric processes.

Where and how are we doing such work as this? In many places and in many ways, none of them yet adequate it seems, but there is hope. A few examples should do for now, before we return to our day's occupation or (preferably) our life-long vocation.

Presbyterian Church (USA). This large denomination is among many which have adopted major statements and goals for their denominations on environmental stewardship and earthkeeping, based upon research of biblical and theological material coupled with assessment of the environmental problems faced by society. Many denominations have a special office or a division for church and society that oversees the implementation of these statements and goals in their congregations. The statement adopted by the General Assem-

bly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) in 1990 is illustrative. This declaration: (1) recognizes and accepts restoring creation as a central concern of the church, to be incorporated into its life and mission at every level; (2) understands this to be a new focus for initiative in mission program and a concern with major implications for infusion into theological work, evangelism, education, justice and peacemaking, worship and liturgy, public witness, global mission, and congregational service and action at the local community level; (3) recognizes that restoring creation is not a short-term concern to be handled in a few years, but a continuing task to which the nation and the world must give attention and commitment, and which has profound implications for the life, work, and witness of Christian people and church agencies; (4) approaches the task with covenant seriousness—"If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God . . . then you shall live"—and with practical awareness that cherishing God's creation enhances the ability of the church to achieve its other goals.⁴³ This and most other denominational statements are readily accessible on the Internet.

Town of Dunn, State of Wisconsin. A land stewardship plan, adopted by this town of 34.5 square miles was adopted by the people of this Wisconsin town in the late 1970s, following a process that involved a comprehensive inventory of natural and cultural resources and numerous rounds of debates and discussions by the townspeople. This plan not only provides for the current population of 5,400 people but also maintains a system of wetlands that include a number of marshes and a tamarack bog, all of which have been protected along with their wildlife, and an array of agricultural lands that are being kept in production. The Town of Dunn, whose success as a sustainable community of people that is integrated with farms and conservancy areas is featured on the U. S. Department of Energy web site as an example of ecological and social sustainability, uses a combination of policies and tools that have been widely adopted with what ultimately has become nearly unanimous support of the people. These policies and tools address the problems identified by the scientific and theological sections in this paper include a purchase of development rights (PDR) program in which landowners who wish to receive the financial benefits of land development are paid the difference between agricultural use value and development value, paid by the town from a fund generated by a modest increase in the property tax rate. This increase in the tax rate actually has kept the total taxes down, since farms generally receive much less in public services than the taxes they pay in contrast to housing developments which receive more than paid in taxes.

⁴³ Presbyterian Church (USA), Call to Restore the Creation, 202nd General Assembly, 1990.

Extensive information is available on the web by entering "Town of Dunn" in a web search engine.

Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies. This institute, transformed from a Christian youth camp in 1979, was developed to serve Christian colleges and universities across North America, which in 2002 numbered fifty-six participating institutions. Designed to supplement academic offerings by a student's home college, Au Sable Institute gives a wide array of courses and grants certificates whose credits apply to each student's college degree. Given in the Great Lakes Forest of northern Michigan and on Whidbey Island in Washington State's Puget Sound, with sites also located in East Africa and South India, the Au Sable program is focused on environmental stewardship and earthkeeping. Each course has deep roots both in theology and in science. A wide array of environments are utilized for teaching and learning that span from the tropics to boreal forests, marine to montane, rural to urban, and professors are drawn widely from Christian faculty members in the United States, Canada, Africa, and India. A central feature is a weekly "integrative session" in which all courses, faculty and students work on a common environmental issue or problem in the field, with work being done across the disciplines represented by the faculty and integrated with biblical teachings on environmental stewardship. Participating colleges agree to cross-list some or all of the Au Sable courses in their college catalogs and bulletins and also commit themselves to promotion of caring for creation on their campuses. A comprehensive web site at www.ausable.org provides details on how this institute is addressing the findings of this paper in science and theology, and is helping people put what they learn and know into practice.

Business, Industry, and the Next Industrial Revolution. There is a very encouraging movement by many businesses and industries to adopt in whole or in part "green practices" in their operations. Searching the internet shows wide activity in this area as many business and industrial leaders seek to use our growing understanding of Creation and environmental problems to do good work. The concept of "good work" recently featured in the book, *Good Work: When Excellence and Ethics Meet* has joined with Green Business, introduced to many by Paul Hawkin to provide a base for discussion, reflection and action by business and industry.⁴⁴ Named one of the twelve best entrepreneurs of the 1980s, Hawkin, producer and host of a public television series shown on 210 stations nationwide and in 115 countries, he is an inspiration for many business and industry leaders. Of his writings, *The Ecology of*

⁴⁴ Howard Gardner, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, and William Damon. *Good Work: When Excellence and Ethics Meet*. (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

Commerce is particularly influential. In a guest essay in Miller's textbook (see above), he writes,

In our pursuit of dominance over the natural world, we have not taken into account the basic principle that industrialism, for all its sophistication, is enormously inefficient with respect to resources, energy, and waste. . . . [The] next stage, whatever it may be called, is being brought about by powerful and much-delayed feedback of information from high levels of inefficiency and waste. As that happens, the foundation of industrialism is giving way while the basis for the next industrial revolution is being established.

This shift is profoundly biological. It's not about the celebration of nature, although that is certainly part of it; it's about the incorporation of cyclical natural systems into our industrial life, our way of making things, and our way of processing things and deprocessing things. The reason this shift is going to happen is because cyclical industrial systems work better than linear ones. They close the loop and reincorporate wastes as part of the production cycle. . . . There are no landfills in a cyclical society.⁴⁵

Ecological research has as a major task the comprehension of energy and material balances that range from the bacterial culture dish to aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems to the biosphere. For every biogeochemical cycle, whether that be for carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus, oxygen, or sulfur, there are complex budgets of matter and energy. And given the material isolation of our planet from the other material of the universe we know that everything must "add up." If it were a matter tracking of dollars and cents that would be enough of a challenge. And if it were a matter of tracking the chemical elements such as carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus, oxygen and sulfur, that would be a much greater challenge. However budgets in the planet and its biosphere include transformations of one kind of molecule to another meaning that some substances disappear as others appear with all the elements adding up, but not the molecules that are constructed from these elements. And there are tens of millions of species engaged in these transformations in a myriad of ways that add to various abiotic transformations. Biospheric economics is overwhelmingly complex and is largely out of reach of human understanding. It is because of this wonderful complexity, already a glimmer in the mind of Carl Linnaeus (Carolus von Linné) that this Swedish systematist could write already in 1791,

⁴⁵ Paul Hawkin. 2001. Natural Capital. In: G. Tyler Miller, Jr. *Environmental Science*. 8th Edition. (Pacific Grove, Calif.: Brooks/Cole, 2001), pp. 34-35.

By the Oeconomy of Nature we understand the all-wise disposition of the Creator in relation to natural things, by which they are fitted to produce general ends, and reciprocal uses. All things contained in the compass of the universe declare, as it were, with one accord the infinite wisdom of the Creator.

Theologians of Linnaeus' time, not having the word "ecology," made the word *oikonomia* interchangeable with God's "dispensations," so that by the seventeenth century, "oeconomy" was frequently employed to refer to the divine government of the natural world.

God's economy was His extraordinary talent for matching means with ends, for so managing the cosmos that each constituent part performed its work with stunning efficiency.⁴⁶

The concept of God's economy here, as we look at the contributions both of science and theology, is particularly relevant to our purposes. This concept does not put God outside of the economy, neither does it put the economy outside of God's work. It gives the Maker of heaven and earth immense respect and yet invites us to behold and to study the economy of Creation. As the complexity and "stunning efficiency" of this economy is humbling for the biosphere economists, so too should it be for monetary economists. It should be so, because as the next industrial revolution is getting under way, and proceeds with incorporation of cyclical natural systems into industrial life—because cyclical industrial systems work better than linear ones—we come face to face with God's economy for Creation. And as we do so, our accounting principles will come face to face with ecological accounting principles as ecologists are beginning to understand these for the biosphere. And here we will have the confrontation between two economic systems: one that has been successful over millennia, is clearly successful in the present, and will be successful far into the future, and our modern economic system with no provision for operating on the time scale of a century and more. Paul Hawken sums up the problem of this confrontation:

As it stands, our economic system is based on accounting principles that would bankrupt a company. Not surprisingly, it is posing problems for the world as a whole. When natural capital is placed on the balance sheet, not as a free resource of infinite supply but as an integral and valuable part of the production process, everything

⁴⁶ Quotations in this paragraph are from Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: the Roots of Ecology* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1979).

changes. The near obsessive pursuit of improvement in human productivity becomes balanced by the need for improved resource productivity. Using more and more resources to make fewer people more productive flies in the face of what we now need to improve our society and the environment. After all, it is people we have more of, not natural resources, so it is people we must use to reduce the flow of matter and energy resource through economies. And that is what can happen when we move from linear extractive systems to cyclical ones.

In the first of his Stone Lectures, delivered at Princeton in 1898, Abraham Kuyper addresses such a life system that embraces the whole of individuals and society. With particular reference to Calvinism (which is the focus of his lectures) he defines religion as a life system. As a life system religion is concerned not only with religious ritual but with all of life. So considered it permeates and integrates every aspect of human reflection, contemplation, and action. As a life incorporates every aspect of life and living, being the permeator and integrator of art, politics, science, technology, and business. It is all-embracing; it is a life system. The relation of religion as a life system to the Creation order is indicated in the definition given in the first section of this paper, by C. Wayne Booth.

A wide-spread respect for the ecological and creation order is translated into responsive human action that includes very well-defined kinds and qualities of manipulation, technology, and ritual. Respect for the ecological and creation order promotes actions that sustain life and discourages actions that threaten life.

When respect for the Creation order is continually and consistently incorporated into individual and corporate behavior it becomes integrated within the life system of individuals and human society. Right living on earth is a consistent and continuous response to what C. Wayne Booth calls the cosmic demand.

It is in this context of understanding of religion as a life system and a passion and desire to live right and spread right living in response to the way things are and function in the Creation order—in response to the creatures present in Creation, to the cycles, flows, and fluxes in Creation, and to the regulatory systems in Creation—that we can order our own lives. Can humanity help achieve in Creation what is “normal?” we may ask. And the answer to this question has to do with engaging in human actions that work in accord with the processes that sustain the biosphere and its habitability. And how should we seek to do this? By understanding the systems of which we are part with such depth that we will recognize, for example, that

responding to unwanted herbivory of crops and garden plants is better accomplished by achieving conditions that do not transform relatively innocuous insects into pests, rather than eliminating these herbivores with insecticides.⁴⁷ This means that prevention of the growth of "thorns and thistles" can be achieved by eliminating the conditions that lead to their invasion and dominance. Pest creation, while currently a result of human actions on the land, does not have to be the consequence of human actions.

Our great problem, it appears is the problem of the human species to which Genesis 1-11 is addressed. Not satisfied with the fruit of the garden, Adam decides to make things "bigger than life" by "doing things his way" and the result is a lot of sweat! Giving over to the regulatory systems of the planet, much like giving over to our body, control of our body temperature, will mean less exercise of power on our parts, but also will mean the achievement of greater freedom.

The human problem is expressed in our sometime willingness to utilize our power for grand-scale destruction of our foes. From observations of ourselves, particularly of the potential for destruction using nuclear power, it becomes clear that we have the capacity to destroy the earth, at least as we know it and as it supports us and the rest of life. And the scriptures tell us that we have the capacity to destroy the earth, at least if we take seriously the proclamation of Revelation 11:18: "The time has come to . . . destroy those who destroy the earth."

But with our destructive capacity comes another capacity not to destroy the world. Human beings have the capacity to do their work in accord with the way the Creation works, in harmony with the ecological and creation order, and as Abraham Kuyper puts it: to image and to honor God in our caring for God's Creation, polishing it to new luster.⁴⁸

So what must we do? We must not ban body temperature regulation or blood sugar regulation in our bodies, or do the equivalent for Earth's biosphere. Instead, we must be going about setting the conditions for healing. We must not overestimate the power of the strong, but believe that the meek will inherit the earth. And we must not get so caught up in making things "bigger and better" only to find our selves so much in control that we lose our freedom.

It seems then, that the wise approach toward living in the world is to strive to live rightly, to serve, protect and preserve the processes of earth that are earth-sustaining and life-sustaining, to set the conditions for giving over to

⁴⁷ Uvarov, B. P. "Problems of Insect Ecology in Developing Countries." *Journal of Applied Ecology* (1964): 1:159-168. This paper is reprinted in Barbosa, Pedro and T. Michael Peters, eds. *Readings in Entomology*. (Philadelphia: Saunders, 1972), pp. 8-17.

⁴⁸ See Kuyper's "So God Loved the World!" Chapter 7 in *Keep Thy Solemn Feasts: Meditations by Abraham Kuyper*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1928), pp. 70-71.

the earth control of processes we have tried to claim for ourselves and to develop an economy of action in the world that fosters freedom within the constraints of maintaining the processes of earth that sustains the life of the biosphere, including our own.

Religion nurtures the capacity of people, not to master the world, but to master themselves, responding appropriately to the cosmic demand. And when we master ourselves in this way, we will again discover joy.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Lutheran theologian, Joseph Sittler, wrote in this regard that "If the creation, including our fellow creatures, is impiously used apart from a gracious primeval joy in it, the very richness of the creation becomes a judgment. . . . When things are not used in ways determined by joy in the things themselves, this violated potentiality of joy . . . withdraws and leaves us, not perhaps with immediate positive damnations but with something much worse—the wan, ghastly, negative damnations of use without joy, stuff without grace, a busy, fabricating world with the shine gone off." Sittler also reminds us, "[T]here is an economics of joy; it moves toward the intelligence of use and the enhancement of joy. That this vision involves a radical new understanding of the clean and fruitful earth is certainly so. But this vision, deeply religious in its genesis, is not so very absurd now that natural damnation is in orbit, and man's befouling of his ancient home has spread his death and dirt among the stars." Joseph Sittler, "The Care of the Earth," in Franklin H. Littell (ed.), *Sermons to Intellectuals* (New York: Macmillan, 1963).

Common Grace and “Spiritual” Stewardship: Guidance for Development?

by VINCENT BACOTE

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DOES Abraham Kuyper's legacy encourage technological development? To rephrase Tertullian's question, we might ask: "What does Jerusalem have to do with Silicon Valley?" To put it differently, does our pursuit of a path toward the New Jerusalem encourage or preclude the development of the created order? Does a vision chastened by a century of wars and technological misuse require us to refrain from development? Kuyper's doctrine of common grace provides us with a helpful perspective on this difficult issue.

KUYPER ON COMMON GRACE

Abraham Kuyper articulated his doctrine of common grace in the Stone Lectures of 1898 as follows:

[Calvinism] has not only honored *man* for the sake of his likeness to the Divine image, but also *the world* as a Divine creation, and has at once placed to the front the great principle that there is a *particular grace* which works Salvation, and also a *common grace* by which God, maintaining the life of the world, relaxes the curse which rests upon it, arrests its process of corruption, and thus allows the untrammelled development of our life in which to glorify Himself as Creator.¹

In this statement on common grace, Kuyper is concerned to show the clear distinction between a grace directed exclusively toward the elect and another which extends to the entire creation. The emphasis on relaxation of the curse expresses the recognition that while the world has been altered and even distorted due to sin, it is not "lost" in the sense that requires escape from rather than engagement with the created order and hence the public realm. This description in the Stone Lectures, given in a context of lauding Calvinism over against other worldviews, also emphasizes development, a central factor in Kuyper's public theology.

¹ Abraham Kuyper, *Calvinism: Six Lectures Delivered in the Theological Seminary at Princeton* (New York: Revell, 1899), 30–31.

It is in relation to the potential for the creation's development that Kuyper articulates the relationship of common grace and history. As a result of the constancy of common grace, history becomes possible. In making reference to history, Kuyper has the intent of encouraging the development of creation. In fact, he speaks of it as inevitable and beneficial:

... common grace opens a history, unlocks an enormous space of time, triggers a vast and long-lasting stream of events, in a word, precipitates a series of successive centuries. If that series of centuries is not directed toward an endless, unvarying repetition of the same things, then over the course of those centuries there has to be constant change, modification, transformation in human life. Though it pass through periods of deepening darkness, this change has to ignite ever more light, consistently enrich human life, and so bear the character of perpetual development from less to more, a progressively fuller unfolding of life.²

Common grace makes progress possible. There is a constant, preservative aspect of common grace which leads to a progressive aspect. Such a view of progress was apparently rare among Christians, as Kuyper criticizes Christian resistance to social-architectural development in society. Rather than opposing progress and engagement in society and culture, Christians should play a central role in directing the development of life, helping to construct a society which operates in accordance with the divine ordinances of creation.

Kuyper also argues that the development of humanity is part of the divine plan. History, the development of life, has a significance and purpose because God works in and on the horizon of centuries past, present, and future. If God is not at work in history, then, Kuyper suggests, one has to credit the development of society to the work of Satan or humans.³ To support this perspective he argues that it is supported biblically. "Scripture speaks of 'the consummation of the ages' (Matt. 13:39-40), a term that does not mean the centuries will terminate at some point but that they are directed toward a final goal and that everything contained in those centuries is linked to that final goal."⁴ The divinely ordained telos of creation history reveals the import and larger purpose of ongoing development.

If common grace is God's work in the world so that the potential of creation is realized, how does this occur? It occurs through the means of

² Abraham Kuyper, "Common Grace" in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 174-175. This quotation reveals Kuyper as a man of his time, particularly in his enthusiastic view of progress.

³ Kuyper, "Common Grace," 175.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 175.

social-architectural construction, through cultural and technological development. In spelling this out, Kuyper again reflects on the telos of creation, and states that the development of creation, the terrain of common grace, has a distinct and separate goal from salvation.⁵

The entire project can be understood as a social-architectural task which aims to improve the conditions of life. Again, Kuyper understands this as separate from the task of salvation, though he argues that God is directly involved through common grace:

The supreme Artisan and Architect will want all that has gone into his design to be realized and stand before him in a splendid edifice. God will take delight in that high human development. He himself will bring it about and into view. Then he will seek in it his own glorification. The control and harnessing of nature by civilization, enlightenment, and progress, by science and art, by a variety of enterprises and industry will be entirely separate from the totally other development in holiness and integrity; indeed, that *exterior* development may even clash openly with an *interior* development in holiness and become a temptation to the believer. Still, that exterior development in holiness has to continue and be completed to bring the *work of God* in our race to full visible realization.⁶

From Kuyper's perspective, it is mandatory that the purpose of common grace reach fulfillment. If fact, he credits common grace with making the primary creation ordinance an attainable goal. Though there is the circumstance of a fallen created order, common grace enables humans to achieve

⁵ Ibid., 178.

⁶ Ibid., 178–179. A couple of things are important to note here. First, one can ask if Kuyper's statement about the temptation of exterior development gives considerable pause to those who find public engagement a questionable enterprise. If it is a temptation, is it not possible that it could lead many well-intentioned Christians to a faith so focused on public concerns that the gospel of special grace is ignored? Clearly, Kuyper's view is that public engagement is a task that must be performed, though with sobriety, and with a view of God's glory as primary. Second, it is also important to point out that for Kuyper, the teleology of creation requires not only positive development, but it is also necessary for evil to flourish in its development, so that the Antichrist can appear and then the consummation of the ages. "At the moment of its destruction Babylon—that is, the world power which evolved from human life—will exhibit not the image of a barbarous horde nor the image of coarse bestiality but, on the contrary, a picture of the highest development of which human life is capable. It will display the most refined forms, the most magnificent unfolding of wealth and splendor, the fullest brilliance of all that makes life dazzling and glorious. From this we know that 'common grace' will continue to function to the end. Only when common grace has spurred the full emergence of all the powers inherent in human life will 'the man of sin' find the level terrain needed to expand this power. Only then will the end be near and judgment come over him suddenly, on a single day, in the span of a single hour." Ibid., 181.

dominion over nature. Indeed, he argues that without common grace, human development over history does not make much sense.⁷

Kuyper's goal was to motivate his constituency to public engagement with the doctrine of common grace as a theological foundation and motivation. Common grace restrains sin, enables development and progress, and makes a positive view of creation possible. Common grace enables and encourages the social architectural task. As S. U. Zuidema has said,

Common grace supplies the believer with the material for fulfilling his calling to be culturally formative and to fight the battle of the Lord in the world of culture. The sphere of common grace . . . is the area where Christian scholarship, Christian politics, Christian social action and individual Christian activity are to be developed. Common grace provides the platform, as it were, on which these cultural tasks are to be acted out. Common grace is *the presupposition of the possibility of Christian cultural activity*.⁸

Kuyper's approach is not free from critical engagement. Cornelis van der Kooi raises concerns related to sociocultural development in his appraisal of Kuyper's doctrine of common grace. While acknowledging that Kuyper's doctrine affirms human cultural activity, van der Kooi reflects an ambivalence toward development. "Two world wars, various outbursts of genocide, threats to our natural environment by unrestrained economic growth have tempered the optimism and kindled distrust of the faith in progress that was so characteristic of Kuyper's worldview."⁹ Though one might affirm the place of culture and the centrality of divine action in the life-affirming aspects of development, an attitude of caution is required. Rather than adhering to Kuyper's view that all of the potentials of creation necessitate fulfillment, van der Kooi suggests that we accept the positive aspects of development as gifts of God, while also considering the vulnerability of humans and the world. In this regard, it is important to recognize that some technological developments, for example, can be undesirable because they may reach the peak of their destructive power. With this perspective, it is still possible to view life in the world as meaningful, yet without unbridled optimism.

⁷ Ibid., 179.

⁸ S. U. Zuidema, "Common Grace and Christian Action in Abraham Kuyper" in *Communication and Confrontation*, (Toronto: Wedge, 1972), 57.

⁹ Cornelis van der Kooi, "A Theology of Culture. A Critical Appraisal of Kuyper's Doctrine of Common Grace," in *Kuyper Reconsidered: Aspects of his Life and Work*, eds. Cornelis van der Kooi and Jan de Bruijn (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1999), 100.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CREATION: THE MISSING LINK

Abraham Kuyper viewed Christ as the root of common grace, yet it is also possible to demonstrate that the work of Holy Spirit in creation is equally essential to his theological rationale for public engagement. The language that Kuyper uses to describe the Spirit's activity in the biophysical order overlaps with his description of the operation of common grace.

Kuyper describes three aspects of the Spirit's activity in creation. First, the Spirit performs a perfecting function in the creative act. In terms of the biophysical order, as the Father spoke and produced the material of creation, and the Son formed and ordered creation, so the Spirit's role is that of bringing the potentialities of creation to their most complete end, which is the glory of God.¹⁰ A central purpose of the Spirit's cosmic work is to be immanent in creation and to promote the progress and development of the created order toward its proper *telos*.

Second, Kuyper views the Spirit as the animating principle of all life, saying

How intangible are the forces of nature, how full of majesty the forces of magnetism! But life underlies all. Even through the apparently dead trunk sighs an imperceptible breath. From the unfathomable depths of all an inward, hidden principle works upward and outward. It shows in nature, much more in man and angel. And what is this quickening and animating principle but the Holy Spirit? . . . This inward, invisible something is God's direct touch. There is in us and in every creature a point where the living God touches us to uphold us; for nothing exists without being *upheld* by Almighty God from moment to moment. In the elect this point is their spiritual life; in the rational creature his rational consciousness; and in all creatures, whether rational or not, their life principle. And as the Holy Spirit is the Person in the Holy Trinity whose office it is to effect this direct touch and fellowship with the creature in his inmost being, it is He who *dwells* in the hearts of the elect; who *animates* every rational being; who sustains the *principle of life* in every creature.¹¹

No life can be sustained apart from the Spirit's involvement, apart from divine vitalization. Further, even the rational faculties of all humans owe their normal function to the Spirit's animating work.

¹⁰ Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, trans. Henri De Vries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1900), 22–24.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 25–26.

The third aspect of the Spirit's role in creation is the restraint of sin. The Spirit constantly antagonizes sin and keeps creation from falling into chaos. This is a vital function as Spirit moves creation to its end of glorifying God.¹²

In Kuyper's theology, the cosmic activities of the Spirit are implicitly linked to common grace. As with his definition of common grace, Kuyper understands the cosmic work of the Spirit as that which seeks God's glory in a perfected *telos*, upholds and maintains the world, and resists the sinful curse on creation so that creation may develop and move toward its intended end. This aligns with the purpose of common grace, revealing the Spirit's role as the energizing force of these capacities. Kuyper also says:

there is no sun, moon, nor star, no material, plant, or animal, and in much higher sense, no man, skill, gift, or talent unless God touch and support them all. It is this act of coming into immediate contact with every creature, animate or inanimate, organic or inorganic, rational or irrational, that, according to the profound conception of the Word of God, is performed not by the Father, nor by the Son, but by the Holy Spirit.¹³

This language reveals the Spirit to be the dynamic force of common grace.

Kuyper also understands common grace as compelling us to responsibly attend to and develop creation, saying:

for our relation *to the world*: the recognition that in the whole world the curse is restrained by grace, that the life of the world is to be honored in its independence, and that we must, in every domain, discover the treasures and develop the potencies hidden by God in nature and in human life.¹⁴

This language perfectly corresponds with Kuyper's understanding of the teleology of the Spirit's work in creation. It reveals that the Spirit's work in prompting the development of life can also be understood as a catalyst for history.

As stated above, the Spirit's cosmic activity is the dynamic element of common grace. From the statements above it is clear that Spirit can be understood as the agent of, or the one who provides the context for, common grace. While Kuyper articulated the centrality of Christ as the root of common grace, the Spirit is equally vital. Though Christ as *logos* is the source of common grace, the Spirit's life-giving, life-sustaining touch is the

¹² Ibid., 24.

¹³ Ibid., 44.

¹⁴ Kuyper, *Calvinism*, 33.

dynamic element of common grace. As such, the Spirit's work in creation can be understood as a central, yet unacknowledged force underlying Kuyper's public theology. (Hence the missing link.) In distinguishing the Spirit's work in common grace, one can articulate the conclusion that the Spirit, as the agent of common grace, is the driving force behind total engagement with the world.

PUBLIC THEOLOGY AND THE STEWARDSHIP OF CREATION

How does one contextualize Kuyper's legacy in a helpful manner for today's questions of technological development and ecological responsibility? One way to set forth the Kuyperian legacy at this moment is to state that the Spirit's work in creation leads to a public theology construed as the "responsible" stewardship of the creation.¹⁵ The Spirit's work in making common grace available through indwelling presence leads to an approach to the creation conceived as a wide-ranging form of stewardship.

Because of the Spirit's role in common grace, all persons are called to greater responsibility as stewards of creation. How does the Spirit's work in creation and common grace lead to stewardship where nature is respected and not viewed as the object of simple anthropocentric domination? While the position here is a view of "dominion" where the world is subject to humanity, the human race is also subject to the God whom we rightly know in Jesus Christ; thus, this subjection is understood through the perspective of the loving lordship of Christ, which is far from abusive. The exercise of dominion is a "holy duty," to be performed under God in all the world in all parts of life.¹⁶ In the performance of this duty, "Christian action in the domain of common grace . . . must minister to the structures of creation and the structures of common grace (which for all intents and purposes coincide)—instead of overturning them! . . . Its results can only be a 'higher development' of 'nature' and the 'natural', i.e., of the creature."¹⁷ This leads to an urge toward cooperation with the Spirit in helping creation reach its potential. Creation is affirmed as good and worthy of full, responsible engagement.

Furthermore, due to common grace, "No Christian has a legitimate reason for withdrawing from the world of God's creating. That holds for the whole of creation, to its farthest reaches; that holds for 'all areas,' that holds in

¹⁵ The term "responsible," while implied in the notion of stewardship, is necessary in this case, because an approach of stewardship will not necessarily be responsible. Bad stewardship is as possible as responsible stewardship.

¹⁶ Kuyper, *Calvinism*, 31.

¹⁷ Zuidema, "Common Grace and Christian Action in Abraham Kuyper," 72.

principle for the whole world of culture, politics included.”¹⁸ There is no room for a sectarian apoliticism in Kuyper’s pneumatology, nor for an anti-creational opposition between technology and theology. Rather, science and politics become means of respecting creation as we transform it in a stewardly fashion to the glory of God.

Practically speaking, responsible stewardship may manifest itself in an environmental concern which may lead to various forms of social action. There is no place for callous disregard of the environment because of an other-worldly focus. Indeed, there has been much Christian neglect of the environment, and the time is now at hand to develop an orthopraxis which reflects the high ideals of responsible stewardship.¹⁹ To do nothing would be to resist the Spirit and misuse common grace.

While it is easy to see how the Kuyper-based view of the Spirit’s work in creation leads to responsible ecological stewardship, how is it that the Spirit’s involvement in creation leads to “responsible” cultural/technological development and political involvement? How is it that the Spirit’s indwelling, life-giving, and sustaining presence in creation prompts a response to the cultural mandate? A good way to understand this relation is to inquire about the function of culture and politics. If we understand both politics and culture as activities in which we “work with” the material of creation, or if we view these activities as our acting “upon” creation, then it follows that both areas require responsible stewardship. Drawing it into the realm of human care, the development and transformation of the potential in nature is the task of creation stewardship.

This discussion of the Spirit as the ultimate driving force behind ecological, political, and cultural responsibility eventually leads to the question of appearances. What forms will technological progress, ecological plans, political philosophies, or cultural norms and values take if there is true reciprocity and cooperation with the Spirit’s enabling, sustaining, and developing power? What should this cooperation look like? Should it look like Calvin’s Geneva mediated through Kuyper’s Amsterdam? Hardly, as the contemporary context is not identical to either era, and has its own unique opportunities and challenges. As they did, we need to discern where the works of responsible stewardship lie in the natural and cultural cities of our day.

One answer to the question of social forms could be that, while one might not rigidly call for a specifically Christian, universally applicable type of

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ In this regard, see Calvin B. DeWitt, *Caring for Creation: Responsible Stewardship of God’s Handiwork* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998).

ecology, politics, and culture, there should be certain common characteristics among all attempts to be responsible stewards of creation. What are these characteristics? At the very least, there should be a climate of service and nurture, a climate of justice, an attitude of humility, and a zeal for creative development—characteristics which are encouraged by common grace. Moreover, although I am arguing for the value of the common grace paradigm, I am not necessarily arguing for Kuyper's application of that paradigm (or that of his followers). Some may disagree with Kuyper's political and cultural views in various degrees, yet one need not adopt his positions in order to appreciate, utilize, and develop his work.

At this point it is significant to present one particular point Richard Mouw addresses in his recent work on common grace. Mouw speaks of "common grace ministries" to describe cultural engagement. While encouraging political activity, Mouw, inspired by Kuyper, extends the response to common grace to every area of life, and speaks of ministries not often considered in discussions of common grace:²⁰

The Christian psychologist who encourages her non-Christian clients to honor commitments, the Christian literature professor at a secular university who highlights themes in a novel that celebrate faithfulness and telling the truth, the Christian corporate manager who instills the will to serve in employees, the Christian farmer who employs specific agricultural methods that demonstrate respect for the integrity of the creation—all of these promote the goodness associated with common grace. We should not confine our attention, then, to how unbelievers on occasion perform those deeds that better the lot of other human beings. We should also think about the ways in which we ourselves, in performing righteous acts that affect the lives of unbelievers, can promote the gifts of common grace.²¹

Mouw's intent is to highlight the broad ways in which the response to common grace can be observed and emulated. All of his examples typify an approach of responsible stewardship over the creation. The use of the term "ministry" is important and strategic for the conception of stewardship of the creation rooted in common grace. If public theology is understood as a kind of ministry, then it could possibly facilitate fruitful discussion with those who perceive of stewardship as the destructive domination of the created order. Additionally, it contributes to the posture of humility that Mouw encourages

²⁰ Richard Mouw, *He Shines in All That's Fair: Culture and Common Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 81.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 81–82.

when responding to common grace and engaging in social architectural activity. Mouw urges his readers to cautiously evaluate the ideas and attempts at social improvement in a way that neither uncritically accepts nor dismisses the object of observation as bearing marks of the Spirit.²² Wrestling with the reality of common grace requires continual refinement in our understanding and continual revision in our attempts at coherent presentation of this Spirit-based reality which prompts responsible stewardship.

Pneumatologically-derived responsible stewardship provides an impetus and rationale for engagement with the myriad, complex issues which impact society. It is important to recover a proper understanding and application of the stewardship paradigm, and a Kuyper-based approach can be quite helpful. In seeking to systematically complete the picture of the Spirit's role in creation and the vital implications which follow, one could do far worse than to incorporate the essence of Kuyper's approach. The Spirit's sustaining and developing power rouses us from our neglect of the environment and our lack of substantive progress in political and cultural/technological development. If this "call of the Spirit" is heeded, then the stage may be set for significant, transformative contributions to the issues of the day. What then is the answer to our restatement of Tertullian's question? The answer is: "Yes, Jerusalem has quite a bit to do with Silicon Valley and Redmond, Washington and all of the 'technological capitals' of our society. We must engage the task with vigor, but always proceed with a caution born of humility and the recognition of our own limitations."

²² *Ibid.*, 93.

Religious Models for Environmentalism: Rediscovery or Retrofitting?

by THOMAS SIEGER DERR

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I HAVE TWO LODESTARS to guide me in my understanding of religious environmentalism. The first is reverence for the integrity of the Word in Christian tradition. The second is respect for the natural sciences.

I.

The first comes easily to me as a child of the Reformed tradition and is particularly apt in this setting, an honored seat of Christian learning in that tradition, and the occasion of celebrating the memory of a famous Reformed theologian. I acknowledge (or confess) that I was raised in the liberal wing of that tradition and thus am far from being a Scriptural conservative. But I admit to a lasting reverence for the Word and for its place in thought, in life, and in worship. Once in a service of the Reformed Church of France I heard the pastor begin his prayers, appropriately I thought, "O Lord, we thank thee for thy Word, which once again gathers us about itself."

Certainly study, interpretation, and reflection can yield much which is not apparent to a first reading. My Puritan forebears are famous for believing that the Lord has yet fresh light to break forth from his Holy Word. But there are, nevertheless, limits to what one can legitimately find there. Not that these limits have not been transgressed by many a sect and cult and private self-anointed prophet with a new message requiring biblical legitimation. I will forbear from naming the obvious examples. We are surely entitled to say, as a matter of intellectual honesty, that the integrity of the text must be respected. The late Will Herberg imagined someone coming to you saying he had discovered Shakespeare and was now reading Hamlet. "Oh," you might respond, "been reading Hamlet, eh? What's it about?" And your friend would say, "It's about a Chinese merchant traveling in Spain." Well, you are entitled to say, are you not, that either he has Chinese merchants and Spain on the brain, or he is not reading Hamlet. So also the interpretation of the Bible has its limits.

I bring up this subject, with its long and contentious history, because we are now confronted in environmental ethics with a self-conscious movement

bent on revising traditional biblical concepts to serve an understanding of ecology developed from entirely non-biblical sources. It is deliberate revisionism, although I prefer to call it retrofitting. Revisionism comes out of a study of the text, starts with the text, and through careful study finds new meanings. Retrofitting comes out of a secular concern, starts with a secular goal, and goes back to the text with the intent to make it support that goal.

Examples abound, often taking the form of argument by extension of the biblical text to include more than is actually warranted by the original meaning. Larry Rasmussen, for instance, has written that the command to love our neighbors must be "extended" to nature, even inorganic nature, to our "non-human neighbors," our "co-siblings of creation."¹ For another example the model of Christ as servant, as in the *kenosis* passage in Philippians, is now taken as a paradigm for our treatment of the natural world, not just for our relations with each other (which is the original context).² That there is no reference here to nature seems not to bother the new interpreters. Still another example is the way biblical concern with human justice is "extended" (once again) to include a command to save the earth. To save the poor and oppressed means not only poor *people* but "the poor embattled earth."³ The temptation to commit such "metaphorical extension" exists even in some surprising places. Not too long ago I gave a talk at Gordon-Conwell Seminary, after which a respondent who was a member of their faculty used just that phrase, "metaphorical extension" (albeit with what I thought was a guilty smile), to apply Jesus' mission to nature. With some naughty relish (given the scriptural conservatism of the seminary), I reminded him to "beware of metaphorical extension."

A more promising line for this school is to stress certain passages, which are suggestive for their viewpoint but which have been less prominent in the great tradition of the classic creeds. The Bible is, after all, a multiform work, with many different lines of thought. One such favorite passage is Romans 8:19–22, where Paul says "The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility . . . the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has

¹ In *Tending the Garden; Essays on the Gospel and the Earth*, ed. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987, p. 199.

² Loren Wilkinson, et al, *Earthkeeping in the Nineties: Stewardship of Creation*, rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1991, pp. 12, 289–99; Douglas John Hall, *The Steward: A Biblical Symbol Come of Age*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1990, pp. 120–21.

³ Alberto Munera, S.J., "New Theology on Population, Ecology, and Overconsumption from the Catholic Perspective," in *Visions of a New Earth*, ed. Howard Coward and Daniel C. Maguire. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000, pp. 65–66.

been groaning in travail together until now . . .” If your goal is to establish an independent value for nonhuman nature, you may read this passage as showing that God cares equally for the natural world as for humankind. I read it as confessing the presence of natural evil, a statement that nature is not unambiguously our friend. To the retrofitters it means more reverence for nature and its independent standing. I think it means the amorality of nature which beckons us to scientific study and careful management.

Another suggestive passage popular with these re-doers of the tradition is Colossians 1, where the Son is said to be the image of God, the first-born of all creation, in whom the fullness of God dwells, and through whom God will reconcile to Himself “all things, whether on earth or in heaven”—again, the theme of cosmic redemption. But, I note, the text quite clearly does not give a valuation of nature parallel to a concern for human life; it says that “all things” await reconciliation with God, i.e., that there is cosmic imperfection, or fallenness, perhaps, if we accept that original creation cannot have been faulty.

A third text which has drawn the attention of this school is Rev. 21:1, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more”—an apocalyptic vision of “the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven.” The words here may be understood metaphorically in support of the desired cosmic redemption theme, yes, but not in any sense which values the natural world on a par with humanity. Moreover, I am not at all sure how closely we should accredit the details of what is after all an apocalyptic vision. There is much in the book of Revelation, which we would surely want to treat at arm’s length, and the uses to which it has been put by some of our contemporary apocalypticists should be a warning.

Still another suggestive story is that of Noah, who, the retrofitters note, took *all* the animals into the ark, even the lowliest, deeming them all worthy of being saved, as the Lord commanded.⁴ But not so, I observe; for Noah took only breeding pairs, leaving most animals, quite innocent though they were, to perish in the flood. This looks to me like stewardly animal husbandry on Noah’s part, where a human behaves responsibly toward the natural world by managing it.

It is not difficult to find many other texts, which may be suggestive of the idea of a sacred cosmos, or a cosmos worthy of redemption and thus valuable in its own right. Many a Psalm may be quoted, e.g. Ps. 104, where the work

⁴ Paul Santmire, *Nature Reborn: The Ecological and Cosmic Promise of Christian Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000, p. 122.

of God in creation is limned in delicious detail, right down to trees, grass, and rocks, useful for all creatures. There is Isaiah's vision of the messianic age, where "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid . . . and the lion shall eat straw like the ox . . . [and] they shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain . . ." (Is. 11: 6 ff.) That would certainly be a complete transformation of nature's normal and usual "killing fields." There is also much in the book of Job, which suggests that God has purposes for nature apart from humanity.

We could continue thus, but sooner or later the question of poetic meaning will impose itself. One would hardly expect nature metaphors to be absent from the Bible—it is full of them, as befits the setting of its writers (although the Revelation passage, exceptionally, is urban!). But we will have to allow for some degree of poetic license, else we shall stumble badly over lines like "All the trees of the field shall clap their hands (Is. 55:12)." I believe we can understand in a general way that these passages reflect the doctrine of creation, the imperfection of the world, as we know it, and the hope of divine resolution at the end of days. But to go further, and claim that they make God's way with the natural world equal to the story of God with humankind is quite another matter, and wishing will not make it so.

That is, however, what these new interpreters seek to do. Paul Santmire, for example, who calls himself a revisionist, proudly, embraces these texts for his project. "Paul's was a universalizing gospel," he writes of Romans 8; "it extended to Gentiles as well as to the Jews, to slaves as well as free persons, to women as well as men, to the creatures of nature as well as human creatures." Not that this last extension has received much attention in Christian thought, but now we are experiencing a "paradigm shift" (a favorite term of the retrofitters). "Ours is the day, it now appears, when the last extension of the Pauline vision of universal salvation . . . the inclusion of all the creatures of nature—is coming to the fore throughout the church."⁵

Santmire places me in an opposing school, among those whom he calls apologists. That may not sound terribly complementary at first glance, but he means it, I gather, in the ancient and honored sense, like the early fathers who were "apologists" for traditional Christianity. He doesn't exactly award me the title of *defensor fidei*, but in this case I'll claim it. He and I have been bouncing this subject back and forth for thirty years or so, and we can both justly claim some credit as pioneers in religious environmental ethics. We are agreed in rejecting those whom he styles "reconstructionists," those who blame Christianity for the alleged environmental crisis and turn instead to

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

some form of eastern or counter-cultural mysticism, either dropping the label Christian or so thoroughly rewriting it that it bears little resemblance to the original—Matthew Fox, for example, or many of the ecofeminists. We also want to distance ourselves warily from those who redo theology imaginatively from scratch or from sources in science and philosophy, with light regard for the biblical sources of the faith, like James Gustafson or John Cobb. Nor will we embrace the panentheists, who believe that the being of God penetrates the whole universe, so that all of it exists in Him, though the divine being is also more than the universe. Contemporary examples include Jürgen Moltmann and, somewhat differently, Sallie McFague, with her notion of the earth as the “body of God.”⁶

But none of that is the subject for today. The issue for the moment is how, in what sense our Christian sources pertain to the care of the natural world.

I argue that the traditional and historically principal biblical resources for the human task with the natural world are exactly what we need for responsible environmentalism, indeed that they give a truer picture of the situation than the one the self-styled “revisionists” give us. Chief among these are the familiar words “creation,” “dominion,” and “stewardship.” There is nothing whatever wrong with paying renewed attention to (shall we call them) the “nature friendly” texts of the Bible, and preaching from them. That can be done with perfect integrity, and no doubt it is often appropriate to do that. What *is* wrong is to throw out the traditional concepts as no longer relevant, when they are absolutely critical and widely understood to be so. This new way of conceiving the biblical message seems, unfortunately, to require a rejection of much that is plainly in the tradition, and obviously and deservedly so.

The quarrel here is not just over picking our favorite scriptural passages. The retrofitters are actually intensely critical of concepts like dominion and stewardship, while we “apologists” are equally critical of their nature mysticism. (I hope that is not too sharp a phrase.)

They read the word “dominion” as “domination,” accusing western civilization wholesale of a rapacious, selfish treatment of nature, which is in full accord with that reading of the Genesis text. The venerable word “stewardship,” honored by most Christians from their earliest years, becomes for them a managerial, manipulative, exploitative concept: man as master, even tyrant. Santmire writes “it is best to retire [the words “dominion” and “stewardship”] for the foreseeable future” because “they still carry too much

⁶ Moltmann, *The Future of Creation*, trans. Margaret Kohl. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979. McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993.

baggage from the anthropocentric . . . theology of the past, . . . still too fraught with the heavy images of management, control, and exploitation of persons and resources.”⁷

But that is not what these texts say or imply. The critics have twisted their meaning, or claimed that they are so susceptible to wicked use that they must be jettisoned. I would simply like them to be honored for what they are. Read in their original context, they are guilty of none of the sins now ascribed to them. The command to humans to “have dominion” over the other creatures and to “subdue” the earth comes to the one being who, it has just been said, was made in the image of God. Just as the environmentalist critics of the text now claim, a clear line is drawn between humanity and the rest of creation, and we are put in a special relationship to God.

But it is a relationship, which involves reciprocity and responsibility. It is simply not one that is permitting selfish exploitation; it is not domination. Nature is not there for us to do as we please with it, for we are not ultimately responsible for its very being and ultimate destiny. God is, as the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* makes clear. We are the caretakers, the managers, yes, the stewards, the latter a fine, recurring biblical word which says plainly what our responsibilities are, and what our limits are under and for God’s purposes. Care of the earth is our charge, in such a manner as to keep it fit habitation for all generations yet to come. The Genesis text is a command to caring, responsible planned, constructive use. It is the antithesis of a license for wanton destruction.

One need not belabor the obvious: We humans, above all creatures, are given dominion so that we may be faithful stewards of God’s good creation. There is no way to “retire” these words without losing something central to biblical theology.

Were there time I could elaborate on my suspicion that other religious traditions are doing their own retrofitting. Judging by the new collections of environmental writings from the various world religions, a process similar to the one I just described for the western tradition is well under way. Many of the contributions come from westerners who have studied these traditions and picked out usefully ecological texts, or texts, which can be made to serve. But I am not sure that the larger themes of these traditions will help them very much. In Asian traditions, and in mystical pantheism generally, the world emanates from God, or is spun forth from God as a dream, or is born from God’s body. In any case, as long as the entire cosmos is ultimately

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

destined to be reabsorbed into God, it must necessarily lack inherent value. These traditions are often a-cosmic or anti-cosmic at base.

Furthermore, if one can judge by the facts on the ground, these traditions have not kept their peoples from environmental degradation, and indeed their record may be worse than that of Christian peoples. China, India, and the Middle East and North African lands seem to be prime examples of bad management over centuries, and one would not count Southeast Asia and Japan as much better. So their ecological retrofitters have their work cut out for them.

What all "revisionists" (to give them their own word) have in common is an attempt to weld new ecological science to traditional theology, if possible by responsible reinterpretation ("recovering neglected portions of the tradition" is a favorite device), but if necessary by brute retrofitting.

II.

That brings me to my second lodestar, the natural sciences. I come almost as inevitably to this as to the first. My father and grandfather taught physics at MIT, and I have been raised in that faith as surely as in the church—not that I ever perceived much of a troubling contradiction between them, for both of these men were churchmen. But the questing mentality of the sciences, the desire to know what they can tell us and where they must remain silent, was part of my youth. I grew up with books like *Physics and Philosophy* and *Man the Unknown*. I loved a professional journal to which my father subscribed, fat and glossy and full of pictures and diagrams of machines. It was called simply *Power*—and it was not about the Holy Spirit.

While I take it as axiomatic that we are part of a mystery we can never, by our natures, understand, it belongs nevertheless to science to push back the boundaries of what we can know. Certainly scientists speculate on the big mysteries, and interestingly, too; but speculation is the dessert, so to speak, which one is permitted after tackling the main course, which is to know the natural world as thoroughly as one can.

It has always seemed to me that the more one knows about the natural world, the less one can ascribe either wisdom or morality to its workings. I cannot find that nature is an actor with will or purpose. Nature does not "know best," as some ecologists are wont to say. It is neither wise nor foolish, and to call it so is an anthropomorphism. Neither is it moral or immoral, but rather amoral. It does not have ethical quality or capacity. If it has a moral structure, it is certainly not one that we would want to embrace, full as it is

with cruelty and sudden death. No, wisdom and morality dwell at a higher level than what we can discern with the tools of science.

Theologically we are bound to ask what our ultimate destiny is, of course, and if we are really bold speculators, ask what the religious destiny of our planet is. I tend to give minimalist answers to those questions, arguing that we had better not claim to know too much of God's purposes with us. We are permitted to know, by faith, that God cares for us, wills our redemption, cares also for his entire creation, and in some fashion holds its destiny. But the details are entirely beyond our ken. Because of my fealty to the natural sciences, I accept the scientific judgment that when the sun burns out, maybe four billion years from now, the world will end in fire and ice. It is quite pointless to wonder seriously what will have become of the human race by then; only wild and fanciful guesses are allowed.

What we can read in nature about our origin and destiny is really quite limited. I am aware of the "intelligent design" argument, which holds some promise, at least as a permissible reading of ambiguous data, and which I find incipiently in Kuyper's essay on Calvinism and science. Of course it appears much earlier in many forms, like Kepler's reported exclamation on discovering one of his laws of motion in planetary physics, "Oh God, I think thy thoughts after thee!" It occurs most influentially in deism, which, though Kuyper formally rejects it, is also suggestively present in his essay, in his celebration of divine foreknown providence as the foundation of the scientific mentality. I intuit here the Newtonian universe, with God as the grand designer. Newton himself was not a deist, I should add, but his physics became a prop of that school. His portrait hung on the wall of my grandparents' house; and when I was a child, after my grandfather's death, my grandmother planted me in front of this portrait and said, "Your grandfather used to say, if ever a man's face breathed intelligence, that one does." I have the portrait now on my office wall—I have the portrait, but that does not make me a deist.

My difficulty here is a reluctance to read the will of God too closely in the natural world. It does follow from the doctrine of creation that nature and grace are not wholly antithetical, as of course the natural law tradition affirms. Grace does not destroy nature but perfects it, as the Thomistic adage has it. Is nature, then, a sacrament of the invisible God? Or is it fallen, broken, awaiting its redemption, a testimony to the gulf between Creator and creation—even without the contribution of human sin, as Calvin and Barth said?

Before I hazard my own answer, let me note first that of the self-styled "revisionist" school. Their project aims at a minimum to restore nature's

standing before God to a value independent of any divine concern for human beings. We are but one part of nature, and the whole has a story with God, not just our human part.⁸ Some would make nature a value unto itself, and claim that it has that *in se* status even apart from any relation to a Creator. It is at least plausible, they say, that the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* is faulty, wrong, because it produces a "monarchical model" of God as a king over nature, which needs to be jettisoned in favor of a model that will give nature independent status.⁹ Then, given that elevated standing, the natural world is capable of eliciting our reverence. That is not too strong a word. It is an independent entity to which we can relate as an "other," if not in Buber's "I-thou" manner, then at least as a separate being which can draw out of us surprise, awe, and wonder. It will no longer be the neutral substratum of our human lives, which requires our managerial stewardship. St. Francis, not St. Benedict, has the right word.

I am afraid that none of this strikes me as terribly realistic about the earth and the human place in it. We are distinctly different from the rest of nature, obviously so, and that means we have special powers and responsibilities. Of course we are interdependent with the natural world—no one denies that, but that does not change our fundamentally distinct place. It is also a piece of perfect realism to acknowledge that there are forces in the natural world which are not friendly to us, and which it is our task to combat and restrain, so far as possible. I think of disease, drought and famine, and calamitous events like volcanoes and tornadoes and meteor impacts. Even death, inevitable though it is and testimony to our biological rooting though it is, may be resisted, postponed, and softened. And all of this we shall do with science as our principal ally.

So I cast my lot with the Calvinists, and find nature broken. I am not sure that there is not even a certain randomness in nature's behavior, and that if it possessed in any sense original perfection, as divine creation argues, it does not now deserve to be called perfect. At the very least we can say that the doctrine of creation means that nature is *not* sacred and may be approached as object for study, not subject. In any case there seems to me plenty of evidence to justify the judgment that it is fallen (although not as we are, for it can hardly sin) and should not receive our unstinted praise as a repository of wisdom and goodness. It is not the standard of the normative. Think of past ice ages, or the primeval fireball.

⁸ Santmire, pp. 62-72.

⁹ Catherine Keller, "The Lost Fragrance: Protestantism and the Nature of What Matters," in Coward and Maguire, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

If nature is a stand-alone entity, antecedent to the spirit of God moving on the eternal waters, then its imperfections are comprehensible. The primal matter comes before God, independent, perhaps able to retain something of its original status with its disagreeable elements. Matters are not so easy if there is *nothing* before the word of God, for almost immediately we stumble upon the classic problem of theodicy. If we ascribe all that exists to the act of God who "saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good," then the natural world has more value than it could have as a stand-alone entity, but its harmful elements are harder to explain. Nevertheless we can and do try, as the history of theology shows. And at least this way we have the possibility of understanding and contextualizing natural evil, rather than having to face it as a brute, meaningless, threatening datum.

Along with most Christians who have ever lived, I imagine, I find this situation difficult and puzzling, and I am not here arguing a finished position. In the end I place the imperfections and trials of this world, this earth, within the context of Christian hope. I do not romanticize nature. I do not hold it in mystic awe. I regard it with the realistic eye of science in order to understand it, and proceed with the intent of Christian stewardship in managing it. I accept as a tenet of faith that God will somehow bring all to resolution. But there is simply no way we can put any detail on that conviction. Indeed, given the scientific account of the end of the earth and sun, it can only be held as a "hope against hope." I do not believe that the idea of cosmic redemption can tell us much about the fate of our particular planet. Still, the mystery of the cosmos is greater than our earth, and greater than any human knowledge can ever encompass. We stand in ignorance, but we also stand in faith that God's purposes do not fail. In the meantime we know our task: We are to manage the world as a habitat fit for humanity, now and as far into the future as we can see.

The Anthropogenic Earth: Integrating and Reifying Technology, Environmentalism, and Religion

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“SO LONG AS WE do not through thinking, experience what is, we can never belong to what will be. . . . The flight into tradition, out of a combination of humility and presumption, can bring about nothing in itself other than self deception and blindness in relation to the historical moment.” Martin Heidegger²

INTRODUCTION

A principle result of the Industrial Revolution and associated changes in human demographics, technology systems, cultures, and economic systems is a planet where the dynamics of major natural systems are increasingly shaped by human activity—the anthropogenic Earth. Continued stability of both human and natural systems will require development of the ability to ethically and rationally engineer and manage coupled human-natural systems in a highly integrated fashion. Clearly, this Earth systems engineering and management (ESEM) capability does not yet exist. It is, moreover, apparent that the current science and technology base, institutional and governance structures, and ethical, philosophical, and religious systems are not yet adequate to the challenge. But failing to develop an ESEM capability does not lessen human domination of the Earth; it just facilitates evasion of responsibility.

The institutional and knowledge gaps may be apparent to some. However, the profound philosophic and religious challenge posed by an Earth increas-

¹ This paper is a summary version of a longer paper that covers these areas in much greater detail. See B. R. Allenby, “Observations on the Philosophic Implications of Earth Systems Engineering and Management,” Batten Institute Working Paper (Batten Institute, Darden Graduate School of Business, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA., 2002). To the extent some of the discussion in this paper may strike some as incomplete or, worse, somewhat superficial, I apologize and refer the reader to the full text.

² M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, W. Lovitt, translation (New York: Harper Torchbooks, original essays 1952–1962, collected in 1977), pages 49, 136.

ingly shaped by one species, and the concomitant need for ESEM, is seldom recognized. For ESEM is not just the beginning of a fundamentally different relationship between a dominant species and a planet; it is also the culmination of 2,500 years of human history, which has in fits and starts resulted in the ascendancy of technological humanity. As Barrett notes, "A great chapter in human history—twenty-five hundred years long, from the beginnings of rational thought among the Greeks to the present—has come to an end. . . . [a situation which] calls us towards some other dimension of thinking of which we can catch now and then perhaps only glimmers."³ That dimension of thinking is ESEM, and the purpose of this paper is to begin building the intellectual foundation of ESEM as a rational and ethical response to the anthropogenic Earth.

The fundamental importance and great complexity of the ESEM discourse should not be trivialized. Environmentalism as a discourse has been powerful and valuable but, applied outside the implicit boundaries it has observed for the past century, carries within it the same potential for destruction as any ideology. The technologist discourse, until it is leavened with a more sophisticated appreciation for the complexities of coupled human-natural systems, and a concomitant reduction of hubris, similarly carries within it seeds of high modernist disaster. The policy discourse, dominated by environmentalist ideology, the outmoded concept of the absolute sovereignty of the nation-state, and a postmodernist drift (lack?) of values, is hopelessly inadequate to the task it faces. And yet there are some reasons for optimism. If, as Heidegger suggests, we have the strength of will to perceive that we have arrived at the end of one phase of human history, and the beginning of a new one—the age of the human Earth—we can also recognize that it will be human choice as to what that Earth could, or should, be.

I will begin by briefly discussing the growing scientific consensus regarding the increasing human influence on fundamental natural systems, and then introduce the concept of earth systems engineering and management (ESEM). The major part of this paper will then attempt to embed ESEM in the philosophic and religious discourse of the past few centuries. At this early stage, such a discussion can be neither complete nor definitive. Rather, what I do hope to do is ground ESEM in the world as it now is—not as we wish it were—and with this more sophisticated understanding of where we stand now, offer some ideas about our options for the future, thus helping to enable rational and ethical choice.

³ W. Barrett, *The Illusion of Technique* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1979), 222.

Earth Systems Engineering and Management (ESEM)

The foundation of the ESEM discourse is the recognition that the critical dynamics of most fundamental natural systems are increasingly shaped by human activity.⁴ The physics and chemistry of every cubic meter of air and of surface water has been affected in one way or another by human activity. Critical dynamics of fundamental chemical cycles such as those of nitrogen, carbon, sulfur, phosphorus, and the heavy metals, as well as the dynamics at all scales of atmospheric, oceanic and hydrological systems, are increasingly dominated by the byproducts of the technological activities of our species.⁵ The biosphere itself, at levels from the genetic to the landscape, is increasingly a human product. At the genomic level, for example, the human genome has been mapped, as has that of selected bacteria, yeast, plants, and other mammals, which in turn enables the genetic engineering of species. At the ecosystem level, Gallagher and Carpenter remark in *Science* that the concept of a pristine ecosystem, untouched by human activity, "is collapsing in the wake of scientists' realization that there are *no places left on Earth that don't fall under humanity's shadow*."⁶

This domination has evolved over centuries of human cultural, technological, and economic development. Population growth over time, linked to the state of technology, has been steadily upwards, from perhaps four million, 10,000 years ago at the beginning of the agricultural revolution, to some 300 million, a thousand years ago, to 6 billion currently. Human population growth clearly accelerated strongly with the advent of the Industrial Revolution, as did economic activity, which followed similar growth patterns on both a global GDP and a per capita basis.⁷

⁴ It is important to note that in many cases the human component of natural systems may be quantitatively small, but if it impacts critical points in the system, it may well dominate important systems dynamics. Thus, for example, the atmosphere contains about 750 gigatons of carbon, next to which human emissions from energy and deforestation, approximately 9 gigatons of carbon per year, appears trivial. The anthropogenic releases, however, are sufficient to increase the carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere from roughly 260 to 350 parts per million, dramatically affecting the ability of the atmosphere to absorb energy that would otherwise be released into space, thus changing the energy density and behavior of the atmosphere in many ways. It is human impact on the *dynamics* of these natural systems that is important, not the relative size of the human component compared to other elements of the systems.

⁵ J. R. McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2000), is perhaps the best general discussion. A more detailed discussion is provided in Allenby, *Philosophic Implications*.

⁶ R. Gallagher and B. Carpenter, "Human-dominated Ecosystems: Introduction," *Science* 277:485 (1997), page 485, emphasis added.

⁷ McNeill, *Something New*; A. Grubler, *Technology and Global Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Against this background of the anthropogenic Earth, ESEM can be defined as the capability to rationally and ethically engineer and manage human technologies and systems, and related elements of natural systems, in such a way as to provide the requisite functionality while facilitating the active management of strongly coupled natural systems.⁸ Obviously, ESEM in many cases will deal with large and complex systems, with complicated biological, physical, governance, ethical, scientific, technological, cultural and religious dimensions and uncertainties. Under such conditions, the usual human assumption of “control” fails, and the appropriate approach requires humility, a strong appreciation of ignorance and uncertainty, and a continued dialog with integrated human/natural systems. Accordingly, ESEM is best thought of as a capability that must be developed over a period of decades, rather than something to be implemented in the short term. Note also that the question is not whether humans should *begin* to design and engineer the world, for that has already occurred. Rather, the question is whether we will in future do so *rationally and morally to the best of our ability*.

One example of ESEM is the recent effort to (re)design the Florida Everglades, a unique ecosystem that has been profoundly affected not just by human settlement patterns, agriculture, tourism, industry and transportation systems, but also by the various management regimes attempted over the past 100 years. In response to the imminent danger of collapse of the Everglades as a functioning ecosystem, a \$7.8 billion Everglades “restoration” project has begun. Its intent is to restore waterflow in non-human systems to functional levels, while continuing to support industrial, agricultural, settlement and other human activity. It is obvious, however, that the Everglades is now, and will continue to be for the foreseeable future, a product of human design and human choices. Human modification of the fundamental dynamics of the Everglades has already occurred: there is no “pristine” system to return to, and the Everglades will never be “natural” again. It will be an engineered system, and it will display those characteristics—including preservation of flora and fauna, if that is a design objective, and the system can be engineered to do so—that humans choose. The challenge is not to restore a hypothetical past state, but to exercise ethical and rational choice based on projections of systems evolution over time. This is the essence of ESEM.

Other ESEM examples that come readily to mind involve anthropogenic atmospheric perturbations such as climate change, large urban areas viewed

⁸ B. R. Allenby, “Earth Systems Engineering and Management,” *Technology and Society* 19(4):10–24 (2000/2001).

as integrated systems, and the death of the Aral Sea.⁹ Study of these and similar cases leads to several foundational observations critical to ESEM and, more broadly, understanding the human Earth:

1. The world is more profoundly multicultural than most people understand or are willing to accept.
2. The world is far more complex than most people understand or are willing to accept. The "high modernist" hubris and technocratic blindness that, for example, Robert Moses and Le Corbusier exemplified as regards urban design are inappropriate and dysfunctional given this complexity.
3. Culture in general, and the religious impulse in particular, are far more important in constructing the world than most people understand or are willing to accept.
4. The anthropogenic Earth is a reification of human beliefs, especially those regarding technology, environmentalism, and religion. These three discourses in particular are tightly coupled and coevolved.

In order to establish a firm ground for a forward-looking discourse such as ESEM, it is first necessary to perceive the current state of affairs clearly and realistically. To do otherwise is to continue mythologies that, although comforting and perhaps even beautiful, can do grave damage as they become reified in a world where natural systems are increasingly part of the human experience. To begin with, note that institutionally, culturally, and economically, the world today is predominantly a product of the Western experience.¹⁰ This observation should not be read as cultural triumphalism, or as denigrating the scientific and technological developments of other cultures. But it was in Europe, especially the rationalistic and scientific Europe of the

⁹ These examples are explored in more depth in Allenby, *Philosophic Implications*.

¹⁰ As A. Giddens comments in *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 174, 136:

[Modernity] is institutionally based on the nation-state and systemic capitalist production . . . Both have their roots in specific characteristics of European history and have few parallels in prior periods or in other cultural settings. If, in close conjunction with each other, they have since swept across the world, this is above all because of the power they have generated. No other, more traditional, social forms have been able to contest this power in respect of maintaining complete autonomy outside the trends of global development. Is modernity distinctly a Western project in terms of the ways of life fostered by these two great transformative agencies? To this query, the blunt answer must be 'yes'. . . . The modes of life brought into being by modernity have swept us away from *all* traditional types of social order, in quite unprecedented fashion.

Enlightenment, where the threads of institutional evolution, religious conviction, scientific and technological capability, cultural systems, and economic theory and market development, all came together. The result was not just the development of ad hoc technologies or scientific discoveries, but the generation of a cultural juggernaut—a set of uniquely powerful networked cognitive systems—which swept over the globe. The most powerful challenge to this structure in the past 150 years has been Marxism—and, of course, Marx himself was a quintessential Enlightenment figure.

The Enlightenment as global culture has succeeded, ironically, because of two somewhat paradoxical characteristics:

1. Only a structure which, like the European Enlightenment, contained its own critique and negation within itself could possibly become the basis for a globalized cultural framework in a multicultural world; and,
2. The Enlightenment framework succeeds only to the extent it negates itself as a unique source of “truth.”

Understanding this context is critical to perceiving and understanding the anthropogenic Earth, for natural systems that, prior to the Industrial Revolution, were relatively unaffected by human systems are now systematically affected by them. As such predominantly natural systems thus become integrated with human systems through, for example, the commoditization of carbon in global climate change agreements or genomes, they increasingly reflect in their dynamics the behavior of human systems. They thus grow to reflect the myriads of human beliefs and activities with which most of us are familiar, from religion to economic systems to everyday behavior patterns. In other words, the philosophic division between mind and body which has characterized elements of philosophic dialog ever since Decartes is obsolete at the level of global systems: human religious, philosophical and cultural structures are, and will be, increasingly reified in the physical structure and dynamics of natural systems. Human mind will become reintegrated with the physical world not at the scale of the human body, but as the structuring spirit of virtually all natural systems—and this will happen not as some grand metaphysical apocalypse, but simply as a result of the number of human beings, and their cumulative economic, political and cultural behavior, and their intentionality, their will. It will be the emergent behavior of a radically new, human world.

This result arises from the profound shift in the relationship of humans to the planet that marks the last century in particular. The journey has been

from "being in nature" (e.g., hunter/gatherer society),¹¹ to opposing and controlling nature (the Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution, and settlement of the American West), to absorbing nature into the human experience. Perhaps it is best, if somewhat simplistically, summarized by saying that human experience was largely endogenous to nature; now nature is largely endogenous to human experience.

That the anthropogenic earth constitutes the reification of Mind in the physical world is apparent; what or whose cognitive processes are involved somewhat less so. Here, Vico's comments on human history, itself increasingly intertwined with the dynamics of natural systems and cycles, are prescient:

It is true that men have themselves made this world of nations, although not in full cognizance of the outcomes of their activities, for this world without doubt has issued from a mind often diverse, at times quite contrary, and always superior to the particular ends that men had proposed to themselves. . . . That which did all this was mind, for men did it with intelligence; it was not fate, for they did it by choice; not chance, for the results of their always so acting are perpetually the same.¹²

Complex systems evolve, in paths that will reflect the actions of myriads of cognitive systems acting at all scales—but it will not evolve as planned by any one of them. The knowledge and control necessary for that task are lacking; the contingency of human systems would at any rate preclude that. Given, however, the dynamic of reification of human belief structures in the anthropogenic earth, the importance of two important human discourses, the environmental and the technological, is apparent. These are complex discourses but an important strand through both of them is their relationship to the religious experience of the West, and, in particular, the Enlightenment. To that we now turn.

¹¹ There is a strong tendency among environmentalists (and some New Age theologies) to romanticize non-industrial "primitive" cultures as inherently more sustainable, more "natural," and more ethical in their treatment of non-human systems. This naïve fiction generally reflects an ignorance of history, and human behavior and culture. Broadly speaking, what has changed over time has been the technological capability to exploit environments, and make them more amenable to humans, not the underlying drive to do so. Indeed, it is undoubtedly that drive that has to some extent led to the unique success of the human species, and, within that species, to some societies and not others.

¹² Quoted in E. P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory* (London: Merlin, 1978), p. 291.

Environmentalism, Cultural Constructs, and Theology

Modern environmentalism is a complex cultural phenomenon. Those who consider themselves environmentalists cover a broad spectrum in most societies, from those who identify and attempt to mitigate specific problems to those for whom "Nature" has become synonymous with "God." This fundamental division in the environmentalist movement is frequently characterized as the "shallow" greens versus the "deep" greens. In the following discussion, I will generally deal with environmentalism as a belief system and ideology, with the understanding that my remarks are consequentially generic—and, of course, not intended to deny that humans are having significant impacts on earth systems.

An interesting aspect of environmentalism is that, unlike most discourses that, thanks to postmodernism, have been deconstructed in the public mind, it remains generally unchallenged. Indeed, it can be urged with some validity that environmentalism is the most totalizing discourse in the world today (albeit not the most powerful, for environmentalist policies are routinely trumped by economic, national security, energy, and other more traditional policy structures). Accordingly, precisely because a totalizing discourse inevitably shapes culture and context to a universal and unrecognized degree, the objective, the normative, and the mythic will be far more difficult to unravel in environmental debate than in other areas of human endeavor. This also implies that environmentalism will become a powerful prism through which other positions, disciplines, and discourses are perceived, and a belief system against which other human values—employment, individual freedom—are judged and criticized.

An elementary point for social scientists, but one that tends not to be understood by either environmentalists or technologists, is that concepts such as "nature," "environment" and "wilderness" do not reflect absolute reality. Rather, they are cultural constructs—ideas that are contingent to their particular time, place, and culture. A primary example is the concept of "sustainable development." Here the history of the cultural construct is quite clear; after all, it was popularized in a specific book, *Our Common Future*.¹³ Over the past fifteen years, however, "sustainable development" and the looser term of "sustainability" have become a principal goal of environmentalism, so what began as a cultural construct now defines for many the desired endpoint for all human activity—the teleology of sustainability. In the pro-

¹³ WECD (the World Commission on Environment and Development, also known as the Brundtland Commission), *Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

cess, the contingency of the term, although quite explicit in its history, has vanished.

Another instructive example is the cultural construct of "wilderness." As Redman notes, "Wilderness is not an easy-to-observe ecological condition as much as it is the interplay between the constantly changing state of nature and the constantly changing state of the human mind."¹⁴ Thus, in the Bible, as in most pre-Romantic literature, "wilderness," as opposed to gardens or agricultural areas, was evil: it was where people went when they were bad. Indeed, for many early Enlightenment Romantics the source of "wilderness" and the wild—viewed at the time as a flaw in Creation—was the Biblical Fall.¹⁵ It is thus perfectly understandable why, when the European settlers first came to North America, they carried with them this image: the pioneer was heroic precisely because she or he tamed a wild, empty, evil wilderness, and made a fruitful agrarian environment of it. The common cultural view was expressed, for example, in John Quincy Adam's 1846 appeal to Americans to settle Oregon, "to make the wilderness blossom as the rose, to establish laws, to increase, multiply, and subdue the earth, which we are commanded to do by the first behest of the God Almighty."¹⁶

But this image changed, especially in the United States. As it was settled, the cultural construct of "wilderness" shifted almost completely, to mean first adventure, then, in the context of the almost entirely mythic American West, to become a defining element of what it meant (usually for the white male elite) to be an American. Wilderness became the place where paradise was recovered; indeed, it became the Other, the sacred within which God was to be found.¹⁷ The irony, of course, is that the usual discussion of religion and environment in the West tends to turn around Genesis 1:28¹⁸ and similar passages from the Bible and other foundational religious texts. But it is the opposite that is closer to the truth: environmentalism clearly embeds within it important elements of Christian eschatology.

¹⁴ C. L. Redman, *Human Impact on Ancient Environment* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1999).

¹⁵ M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1971).

¹⁶ C. Merchant, "Reinventing Eden: Western Culture as a Recovery Narrative," in W. Cronon, ed. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1995).

¹⁷ Cronon makes the point that "to gain such remarkable influence, the concept of wilderness had to become loaded with some of the deepest core values of the culture that created and idealized it: it had to become sacred." *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1995), p. 73.

¹⁸ "And God blessed them [Adam and Eve], and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'"

The roots of much of the deification of nature arise in large part from two elements of the Enlightenment. The first involved the scientific revolution, with its implicit conviction that discovering "natural laws" was, in effect, knowing God. It is not far from seeing the hand of God in natural laws, to seeing nature as evidence of God, to seeing nature, especially in a world where everything else seems to have been made secular, as God. The second, and in a way contrary, Enlightenment project, was the Romantic movement (particularly Rousseau), which, in an effort to reframe medieval Christianity in terms that were compatible with Enlightenment scientific advances, increasingly posited the sacred in "Nature."

This Enlightenment project to reconstruct the sacred, God, as Nature, succeeded. McKibben speaks for many environmentalists—and clearly illustrates the religious force behind environmentalism—when he takes the interesting Nietzschean viewpoint that the "end of nature" necessarily means that "God is dead." Indeed, the pantheistic and the Christian merge for him in "nature": "Wild nature, then, has been a way to recognize God and to talk about who he is. How could it be otherwise? What else is, or was, beyond human reach? In what other sphere could a deity operate freely?"¹⁹ Note here again the need to define Nature as Other in order to maintain its essential sacredness, necessarily rejecting the recognition of the anthropogenic state of the Earth.

The moral hazard of the theology of environmentalism is powerful in at least two ways. First, taken to the logical extreme it implies a world with the fewest numbers of human beings possible: "if nature dies because we enter it, then the only way to save nature is to kill ourselves. The absurdity of this proposition flows from the underlying dualism [between the human and nature as sacred] it expresses. . . . when they [deep greens] express, for instance, the popular notion that our environmental problems began with the invention of agriculture, they push the human fall from natural grace so far back into the past that all of civilized history becomes a tale of ecological declension."²⁰ This is, of course, an obvious restructuring of the story of the Fall and expulsion from Paradise—only Satan has been replaced by civiliza-

¹⁹ B. McKibben, *The End of Nature* (New York: Random House, 1989), p. 77.

²⁰ Cronon, *supra* n. xvii, page 83. While this profoundly anti-human posture would seem beyond the pale, Earth First! founder Dave Foreman, a hero of many environmentalists, has commented that (quoted *ibid*):

Before agriculture was midwived in the Middle East, humans were in the wilderness. We had no concept of "wilderness" because everything was wilderness and *we were a part of it*. But with irrigation ditches, crop surpluses, and permanent villages, we became *apart from* the natural world. . . . Between the wilderness that created us and the civilization created by us grew an ever-widening rift.

tion and human settlement, and God by wilderness "that created us." The outward forms have changed to the words of environmentalism, but the structure and story are that of Christianity. And to achieve salvation—wilderness—we must destroy Satan, who is essentially all human evolution since the hunter-gatherer stage. Quinn in his popular environmentalist novel *Ismael* takes the same position: "The land of the Fall lay within the Fertile Crescent and was surrounded by nonagriculturalists. . . . The tillers of the soil were watering their fields with the blood of Semitic herders. . . . agriculture is the lot of the fallen." And, if the point weren't clear enough, Quinn makes it clear that it is civilization that will destroy the world: "We're definitely living in a way that's going to put an end to creation. If we go on, there will be no successor to man, no successor to chimpanzees, no successor to orangutans, no successor to gorillas—no successor to anything alive now. The whole thing is going to come to an end with us." And why? "We're destroying the world because we are, in a very literal and deliberate way, at war with it."²¹

This powerfully restates the Christian story: to be human—to have evolved at all—is to be fallen. And the environmentalist eschatology is also restated from Christian roots, for recovery of Eden can only be accomplished by an expiation worthy of the sin of civilization: the apocalypse necessary to turn an urbanized world of six billion people into a pre-agricultural society of perhaps scores of millions would be fully as devastating as anything in traditional religious eschatologies—and yet this vision is foundational for environmentalism. It is not just that the ethical implications of a population collapse of this magnitude should give pause to almost anyone. It is also that this position profoundly misunderstands what it is to be human in the first place, for the biological characteristics of our species—large brain size, modern anatomy—coevolved with cultural and linguistic capabilities, and technology. Thus, to urge the abandonment of technology—to argue that virtually any technology, beginning with agriculture, is illegitimate—is, in essence, to argue for the renunciation of the human as a species, and a return to prehuman animality. Only a powerful theology indeed could support such a suggestion—species suicide to atone for alleged cosmic evil.

Technology, Culture and Theology

If the environmentalist discourse is one side of the anthropogenic Earth, then surely technology is the other, for it is technological evolution that

²¹ D. Quinn, *Ismael* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), pp. 171, 173, 178, 238, 130.

underlies it. The role of technology as the intermediary through which humans impact the physical world and its systems, and in a non-trivial sense create their future, requires that we explore some of its more relevant implications.

To begin with, it is important to differentiate between two very different technological activities: designing and engineering artifacts, versus ESEM. Simply put, if an engineer is designing a toaster, she or he does so *within an existing cultural and ethical context*. The activity presupposes by its existence a market system within which a device to toast bread can be engineered, manufactured, sold, and used, and that society finds such a pattern of commerce acceptable and useful. To the extent there are ethical dimensions of the activity, they are explicitly established in legal and regulatory structures. But the same cannot be said of earth systems engineering, for in that case it is not an artifact within an existing context that is being designed; *it is the cultural and ethical context itself*. Thus, designing the Everglades is not just a question of building the proper dike here, or creating a channel there (artifactual engineering): it is selecting a desired outcome—continuation of human presence in Florida with a level of protection of wading birds in the Everglades, for example—that cannot be justified on solely objective grounds, but involves creation of the context itself. The ethical and, indeed, religious dimensions of the Everglades project are not exogenous to the activity, but are important design objectives and constraints.

For most people, technology and technological systems are self-evidently real and rational. But this appearance, true as it is in many ways, begs an important question: why have technology and the underlying scientific enterprises, although based on the achievements of many cultures, become dominant only in one, the Eurocentric civilization that now dominates much of the world? The reasons for this are not trivial, and do not appear to have anything to do with innate capabilities of individuals or the objective dimensions of technology. Rather, technology in the Western tradition has been uniquely coupled with religion. Thus, Noble notes that “the technological enterprise [is] an essentially religious endeavor . . . [that] has been and remains suffused with religious belief,” and argues persuasively that, with the resurrection of Christian millenarianism in the late 1100’s by the Cistercian abbot from Calabria, Joachim of Fiore, a linkage in Western culture between technological evolution and progress towards the Second Coming was created: “[the Joachimite Franciscans] formulated what would become an enormously influential and enduring eschatology of technology, a perception of the advancing useful arts as at once an approximate anticipation of, an

apocalyptic sign of, and practical preparation for the prophesied restoration of perfection."²²

This integration of Christianity and the technological enterprise is very apparent in the foundational writings of early European scientists. Consider, for example, one of the first utopian fables, Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*. The centerpiece of the "fable," as Bacon calls it, is Solomon House, "dedicated to the study of the works and creatures of God. . . . the finding out of the true nature of all things (whereby God might have the more glory in the workmanship of them, and men the more fruit in the use of them)." The inhabitants are devoted to science and research, which is clearly equivalent to serving God: "we maintain a trade, not for gold, silver, or jewels; not for silks, not for spices, nor any other commodity of matter; but only for God's first creature, which was Light. . . . knowledge of the affairs and state of those countries to which they were designed, and especially of the sciences, arts, manufactures, and inventions of all the world; and withal to bring unto us books, instruments, and patterns in every kind."²³ The focus on applied knowledge (that is, on technology), its self-evident linkage with Christianity and the workings of the mind of God, and the religious mandate to advance the technical arts, is apparent. Bacon has in essence projected the New Jerusalem, and it is a scientific and technological utopia. In this light, it is striking that Solomon House in *New Atlantis* was the model for the scientific societies that followed Bacon, especially the Royal Society of London, whose members regarded him as the founder of the new scientific philosophy. And indeed the view of technology as a means of salvation was a powerful current underlying the evolution of institutional technology, through the Rosicrucians and, later, the Freemasons. The latter were instrumental in founding many of the institutions supporting Western technological development, including the Royal Society, the French *La Loge des Neuf Soeurs* (sometimes called "the UNESCO of the eighteenth century"), and the principle early engineering schools in France (the *Ecole des Ponts et Chaussées*, the *Ecole Polytechnique*). These in turn formed the model for later engineering institutions such as West Point.

Nor has this grounding in Christian millenarianism disappeared from modern technology. While usually implicit, it occasionally becomes quite explicit, especially in the two areas of biotechnology and artificial intelligence, where the power to create new "life," traditionally reserved to deities

²² D. F. Noble, *The Religion of Technology* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), pp. 4–5.

²³ F. Bacon, *New Atlantis* (Montana, U.S.: Kessinger Publishing Co., 1627, republished 1999), pp. 308–09.

through creation myths, comes closest to realization.²⁴ This also is hardly new; Bacon's chief scientist in *New Atlantis* explains their bioengineering program thusly:

... we make (by art) in the same orchards and gardens, trees and flowers to come earlier or later than their seasons, and to come up and bear more speedily than by their natural course they do. We make them also, by art, greater much than their nature, and their fruit greater and sweeter, and of differing taste, smell, colour, and figure from their nature. And many of them we so order as they become of medicinal use. . . . By art, likewise, we make them [beasts and birds] greater or taller than their kind is, and contrariwise, dwarf them, and stay their growth; we make them more fruitful and bearing than their kind is, and, contrariwise, barren and not generative; also we make them different in colour, shape, activity—many ways. *We find means to make commixtures of divers kinds, which have produced many new kinds, and them not barren, as the general opinion is. . . . neither do we this by chance, but we know beforehand of what matter and commixture, what kind of those creatures will arise.*²⁵

²⁴ Thus, for example, the artificial intelligence researcher Hans Moravec wrote in *Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), page 4: "It is easy to imagine human thought freed from bondage to a mortal body—belief in an afterlife is common. But it is not necessary to adopt a mystical or religious stance to accept the possibility. Computers provide a model for even the most ardent mechanist." Arguing (at 1) that we are currently "uncomfortable halfbreeds, part biology, part culture, with many of our biological traits out of step with the inventions of our minds," he then proceeds to outline the technological equivalent of death, salvation, eternal life, and even the Resurrection as human minds are downloaded into information systems (pages 1, 112, 114, 116–17, 122–23):

What awaits us is not oblivion, but rather a future which, from our present vantage point, is best described by the words 'postbiological' or even 'supernatural.' It is a world in which the human race has been swept away by the tide of cultural change, usurped by its own artificial progeny . . . with enough widely dispersed copies, your permanent death would be highly unlikely. . . . Concepts of life, death and identity will lose their present meaning. . . . Our speculation ends in a supercivilization, the synthesis of all solar system life, constantly improving and extending itself, spreading outward from the sun, converting nonlife into mind. . . . [we will reach the point] where long-dead people can be reconstructed in near-perfect detail at any stage of their life. . . . Wholesale resurrection may be possible through the use of immense simulators.

Lest the obvious parallels with Christian eschatology not be obvious, he concludes (page 159), "we are the handiwork of a blind watchmaker. But we have now acquired partial sight and can, if we choose, use our vision to guide the watchmaker's hand."

²⁵ Bacon, *New Atlantis*, pp. 323–24, emphasis added.

Obviously, Bacon is not foreseeing genetic engineering technologies. But his passage is of interest because it indicates that from the beginning of the European technological project, manipulation of life was seen not as irresponsibly playing God, but, to the contrary, as a religious mission—indeed, almost a commandment.

And this same attitude, properly modernized, can easily be found today. Thus, Robert Sinsheimer, molecular geneticist and past President of the University of California at Santa Cruz, comments that:

Throughout history some have sought to live in contact with the eternal. In an earlier era, they sought such through religion and lived as monks and nuns in continual contemplation of a stagnant divinity. Today, they seek such a comfort through science, through . . . the long quest back through time and evolution for our own origins. . . . The lives of most people are filled with ephemera. . . . But a happy few of us have the privilege to live with and explore the eternal.²⁶

William Haseltine, head of Human Genome Sciences, is even more explicit: "The real goal is to keep people alive forever."²⁷ And Boisselier, who intends to clone the first human being, is equally explicit: "I believe that one day we will reach eternal life through this technique, so I am also fighting for the right of the future reborns, or should we say the resurrected."²⁸

In this light, the controversy over biotechnology can be understood as at least in part as theological. The powerful reaction against genetically modified organisms, particularly by an environmentalism with its roots in Rousseau's primitivistic counterculturalism, is against not just the rhetoric, but the reality of a shift in the control of life from an exogenous source (God recreated as "Nature," now made sacred) to human technique. Not surprisingly, the environmentalist ideology views this shift in fundamental responsibility for the design of life apocalyptically:

Why, then, does it [biotechnology] sound so awful? Because, of course, it represents the second end of nature. . . . It is the simple act of creating new forms of life that changes the world, that puts us forever in the

²⁶ Quoted in Nobel, *Religion of Technology*, n. xxii, p. 189, who provides a number of other examples before noting at pages 191–92 that the choice of Christian images and millenarian language "is a sure sign of the enduring influence of the mythology of medieval Christianity in the shaping of Western consciousness, to which these individuals too are heir, whether or not they are Christians themselves."

²⁷ "Futurology Corner," *Science* 290:2249, 22 December 2000.

²⁸ B. Boisselier, "Think of Parents' Wishes," (editorial), *USA Today* April 5, 2001, p. 10A.

deity business. We will never again be a created being; instead we will be creators.²⁹

Thus one arrives at a picture far different than the usual, commonly accepted, version of science and, especially, technology locked in a struggle with Christianity.³⁰ Not only is this conceptualization of the relationship between Christianity and technology wrong, it is downright misleading, for the two are tightly linked and have been for centuries: indeed, one can say that either, without the other, would have failed. As it is, the combination has proved potent indeed, and it is the Western Eurocentric culture that has formed the core of the globalized human enterprise.

The Anthropogenic World View

Consider for a moment where the discussion in this paper has taken us. First, it has become apparent that the Western Eurocentric culture embedded within it important elements of Christianity, and that culture now forms the basis for the globalized culture. The Christian elements are not necessarily explicit, but especially the eschatological elements, tightly braided with the cultural and technological systems they evolved with, are implicit. Technology is a Western project, and in fact the dominant Enlightenment culture has succeeded primarily because power (economic and military), science and a scientific culture (an intelligible universe with the Mind of God and human rationality aligned), and religious zeal (technology as salvation) are integrated within it. Moreover, modern environmentalism as a doctrine also embeds significant elements of Christian theology, although it is again generally implicit and not infrequently distorted, especially through the lens of Rousseau's "noble savage" myth. Meanwhile, the related cultural constructs of sustainable development and sustainability have evolved from the same background; although not explicitly Marxist, in their concern for egalitarianism and communitarianism, and their teleological focus, they clearly derive from the Marxist utopian tradition, which in turn derives from Christian utopianism as in More and Bacon, and before that from the prototypic utopia, Plato's *Republic*. This structure, with three great discourses—the technological (probably the strongest), the Christian as explicit religion, and environ-

²⁹ McKibben, *End of Nature*, p. 166.

³⁰ I emphasize Christianity because of the fundamental alignment of the modern technological enterprise with that faith. Obviously, this creates a difficult dynamic for religions, such as Islam, which lie outside that tradition, and must decide whether, and how, to work with a technological society that, to some extent, embeds important elements of the Christian tradition within itself.

mentalism as theology, along with the minor discourse of sustainability—combine to create a meta-Christian unity.³¹ The discourses form a spectrum of teleologies, from the Edenic to the New Jerusalem of technology, with utopian sustainability—to some degree a blending of the environmentalist and the technological, an attempt to blunt their radicalism while still creating a utopia on earth—somewhere in the middle. Although it is superficially ironic that technological society and its most powerful critic, environmentalism, arose from the same cultural and theological traditions, this is not at all surprising: only an antithesis which carried the power of a dominant culture could hope to be heard at all against the powerful thesis of technological advance.

We have also seen that the world in the past few centuries has been, and is increasingly being, physically structured to reflect cultural, religious, and ethical intangibles as human activity increasingly manipulates earth systems. This makes it important to understand the principle theological elements that will be thus reified, and what their implications may be. Obviously, this is particularly true where major theological underpinnings are both eschatological and teleological, and thus offer the possibility of becoming to some extent self-fulfilling prophecies, at least in the long term. That religious beliefs are highly sensitive is obvious, but a failure to reasonably and tolerantly explore these questions, which increases the probability that powerful theological forces will continue to affect the evolution of the anthropogenic world in ways which are both hidden and not understood, raises obvious dangers.

Finally, it is important to understand the forces supporting teleological approaches to ESEM, so that the possibility of future paths and, even, suggested end states can be evaluated as objectively as possible. For example, the deep green Edenic vision of a world with a few small urban islands surrounded by a completely non-human wilderness requires a dramatic reduction in population. Achieving such steep population declines in a morally acceptable manner would, at best, be difficult; moreover, history indicates that population fluctuations almost inevitably impact the poor and underdeveloped disproportionately. The high technology visions of the New Jerusalem, frequently presented with little grounding in human psychology, are equally problematic from both a physical systems and a human equity

³¹ These discourses obviously include secular and non-Christian elements; like all human institutions they are highly syncretic (as is the discourse of Christianity itself). They are, however, embedded in, and achieve much of their power from, their implicit Christian dimensions, so much so that they are properly understood as fundamentally Christian discourses.

perspective. It is not that either, or for that manner any, teleological vision is liable to be realized: the complexity of these systems, their internal dynamics and inherent unpredictability, inevitable contingency as a result of human intentionality, and the constraints created by system structure preclude that. But teleological impulses, carried as general cultural traits, can be very powerful, especially as they tend to remain unconscious, and as such they can unquestionably impact the paths that realistically lie in the option space of the anthropogenic world. They often express themselves not as teleologies *per se*, but as little understood constraints on the "option space" open to an anthropogenic culture and world.

All institutions, discourses, cultures, disciplines, and individuals face the world with limited perception and a package of simplifying constructs (including languages). Without some such filters, any cognitive system short of deity would be overwhelmed by experience. And emotionally, and politically, and ideologically, oversimplification is almost always far more comfortable than reality. The problematic of the anthropogenic world, however, is that its dynamics are transboundary and omnipresent, showing little respect for the categories and boundaries that have served humanity so well for the past thousands of years. We can, therefore, no longer hide behind them. The anthropogenic world demands far more of us, for it is a human creation just as any other institution we have built. We are called by what we have already wrought to a responsibility, a maturity, an authenticity, and a rationality that we not only lack, but are even unable to define. Sartre was right: "Man is condemned to be free." And in the context of the human Earth, this is a challenging freedom indeed, for it is not just an authentic self, not just an authentic community, but an authentic world for which we are morally responsible. With no illusions as to how far we still have to go, we also have no choice but to begin; to do otherwise is to abdicate our humanity, and to lapse into a profound and ethically bankrupt inauthenticity.

A Canopy of Grace: Common and Particular Grace in Abraham Kuyper's Theology of Science

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I. INTRODUCTION

In his chapter on "Calvinism and Science" in his *Lectures on Calvinism*, Abraham Kuyper maintained a delicate balance between the doctrine of common grace and the concept of the antithesis. On the one hand, Kuyper argued that the doctrine of common grace permits Calvinists freely to recognize and to appropriate the scientific achievements of non-Christians. The doctrine of common grace prompts Calvinists to seek God not only in Scripture but also in "nature and its wondrous character, in the production of human industry, in the life of mankind, in sociology and in the history of the human race."¹ Common grace breaks down the barrier between Christian and non-Christian in the sciences, legitimizing the contribution of "secular studies" to the formation of the Calvinist mind.² On the other, Kuyper described a "principal conflict" between "*two scientific systems*" that he titled the "normalist" and the "abnormalist."³ Whereas the normalist conforms the spiritual to the framework of the natural sciences the abnormalist interprets the data of natural science within the framework of divine revelation. An absolute antithesis divides normalist and abnormalist sciences. "The *normal* and the *abnormal* are two absolutely differing starting-points, which have nothing in common in their origin. Parallel lines never intersect."⁴ The antithesis between normalist and abnormalist arises because of the influence of particular grace; the mind of the normalist is unregenerate whereas the mind of the abnormalist has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit.⁵ Famously, Kuyper asserted that the antithesis between normalist and abnormalist ran so deep that it demanded the establishment of distinct universities, founded upon distinctive principles, in which normalist and abnormalist researchers

¹ Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931), 125.

² Cf. *Ibid.*, 126.

³ *Ibid.*, 131ff.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 136ff.

could pursue scientific research according to their preferred paradigm. In short, Kuyper called attention both to the work of common grace in science and to the antithesis between Christian and non-Christian science. His simultaneous commitment to the work of both common and particular grace in the sciences required Kuyper to balance his desire to break down the walls dividing Christians and non-Christians against his desire to build them back up again.

Commentators have long noted internal tensions in Kuyper's theology of science. In a 1939 article titled "Kuyper's Wetenschapsleer," Herman Dooyeweerd called attention to a fundamental tension between what he termed the "Calvinistic" and the "scholastic" lines of thought in Kuyper's theology of science.⁶ Dooyeweerd traced the "Calvinistic" line to Kuyper's doctrine of the antithesis; he traced the "scholastic" line to Kuyper's acceptance of the "metaphysical logos doctrine," that is, the theological speculation that the world bears within itself the imprint of the divine logos through which it was created.⁷ Dooyeweerd argued that these lines of thought stood in irreconcilable conflict. "The truth is that both lines of thought in Kuyper's scientific work are demonstrably in contradiction with one another and that an internal reconciliation must therefore be considered impossible, since they go back to completely mutually exclusive points of departure."⁸ Granted, Dooyeweerd did not oppose particular to common grace in this article. He freely admitted that truth emerges on the other side of the antithesis. "The philosophy of the law-idea [*de wijsbegeerte der wetsidee*] has never defended the notion that important elements of truth cannot shelter in philosophy that has not sprouted from Christian roots [*Christelijken levenswortel*]."⁹ Still, by rooting out the "scholastic" line from his theology of science, Dooyeweerd was undermining a key pillar of Kuyper's doctrine of common grace, namely, the belief that Christians and non-Christians could both progress in the natural sciences because God created their minds in harmony with the natural world.

I sympathize with Dooyeweerd's assertion that the tensions internal to Kuyper's theology of science cannot be harmonized into a single coherent account. The richness and abundance of ideas in Kuyper's theology resists systematization. And, of course, not every concept that Kuyper took up and explored in his theology is edifying or worth retaining. Contemporary theo-

⁶ Herman Dooyeweerd, "Kuyper's Wetenschapsleer," *Philosophia Reformata* 4(1939): 193-232.

⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, 219.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 196f. My translation.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 200. My translation.

logians must exercise a greater than standard degree of interpretative vigilance when analyzing Kuyper precisely because of his capacity to absorb so many divergent strands of the broader intellectual and cultural tradition into his theology. But I think that even if we accept Dooyeweerd's criticisms of the "scholastic" strand in Kuyper, the most important aspects of Kuyper's doctrine of common grace in the sciences can still be salvaged. Moreover, I think a revised version of Kuyper's doctrine of common grace can be made compatible with his concept of the antithesis, although I also think that those two sides of Kuyper's theology will always stand in some tension. In what follows, I hope to demonstrate how the tension between common and particular grace in Kuyper's theology of science can be rendered creative rather than contradictory through his christology.

II. KUYPER'S DOCTRINE OF COMMON GRACE

The best way to grasp the significance Kuyper attached to the doctrine of common grace is to consider its function in the development of his theology as a whole. In the second of his two volume study of Abraham Kuyper and the *Vrije Universiteit*, J. Stellingwerff produces an illuminating periodization of Kuyper's theology that helps to clarify the development of his concept of common grace and of the antithesis.¹⁰ Stellingwerff divides Kuyper's works into four periods: "The first period ran from his conversion at Beesd to the death of Groen van Prinsterer (1863-1876), the second until after the Doleantie (1876-1887), the third from the lecture *Twofold Fatherland* to the end of Kuyper's prime ministership (1887-1905) and the last to Kuyper's death (1905-1920)."¹¹ In each period, Stellingwerff contends, Kuyper regarded and appropriated his Calvinist inheritance from a different theological perspective. The struggle to renew the spirit of Calvinism in The Netherlands dominated the first period of Kuyper's activity. From his call to the ministry in 1863 to his encounter with the conventicle led by Pietje Baas and his conversion to Reformed orthodoxy during his pastorate in Beesd (1864-1867), from his forays into journalism in *De Heraut* and *De Standaard* to his entry into politics in 1874, Kuyper waged internal and external battles for Reformed orthodoxy. This period ended with the death of Groen van Prinsterer—Kuyper's political mentor—and Kuyper's nervous breakdown in February 1876.¹² In his second period, Kuyper dedicated himself to forming

¹⁰ J. Stellingwerff, *De Vrije Universiteit na Kuyper* (Kampen: Kok, 1987).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 44. My translation.

¹² On the reasons for his breakdown, cf. Peter Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuyper's Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 40-42.

institutions based on distinctively Reformed principles. The constitution of the Anti-Revolutionary Party in 1879, the founding of the *Vrije Univeriteit* in 1880, and the break with the state church in 1886 all took place during this second period of Kuyper's activity. "Theologically, this period was characterized by the motif of the antithesis," Stellingwerff remarks, "such as found in the books *That Grace Is Particular* and *The Work of the Holy Spirit*."¹³ In the third period, Kuyper modulated his emphasis on the antithesis by focusing on the concept of common grace. With his return to active political life in 1894, which culminated in his term as *Minister-President* from 1901-1905, Kuyper developed a theology that encouraged Christian participation in the various spheres of common life such as politics, society, the arts, and the sciences. "Kuyper's major works came into being during this period: *E Voto* (1886-1895), the *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology* (1893-1894), *The Lectures on Calvinism* (1899) and *Common Grace* (1895-1905)."¹⁴ The concluding period of his activity found Kuyper acting as elder leader both to his colleagues in the Anti-Revolutionary Party and the *Vrije Universiteit* and to the so-called *Kleyne Luyden* who read his political and theological articles from week to week in *De Standaard* and *De Heraut*. "In his last period, Kuyper sought once more to express his synthesis between particular grace and common grace from the perspective of Christ's royal office."¹⁵ Major works from this final period include *Pro Rege or the Kingship of Christ* (1911-1912) and *Anti-Revolutionary Political Theory* (1916-1917).

Kuyper first published his reflections on common grace as a weekly column that appeared in *De Heraut* from September 1895 to July 1901.¹⁶ The opening chapter of *Common Grace* supports Stellingwerff's contention that Kuyper was seeking to modulate his earlier concentration on the antithesis between the regenerate and non-regenerate. Kuyper acknowledged that his primary concerns in *De Heraut* theretofore had been the defense of the particularity of grace and the elucidation of the covenant of salvation.¹⁷ While not denying these antithetical forms of grace, he now asked his readers to consider a third form: common grace. As opposed to particular grace and federal grace, "General grace is, with differences of degree, the portion of *all* human beings, including those who have wandered furthest away, who are completely burned up in their consciences and eternally lost."¹⁸ Kuyper

¹³ Stellingwerff, 45. My translation.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 45f. My translation.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 46. My translation.

¹⁶ Cf. James Bratt, ed., *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 165.

¹⁷ Abraham Kuyper, *De Gemeene Gratie* (Kampen: Kok, 1931), 1:5ff.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:9. My translation.

appealed to common grace alongside particular and federal grace because he saw a danger latent in his appeals to the antithesis.¹⁹ Specifically, he saw that any exclusive emphasis on the particularity of grace denies the inherent value of culture and institutions. Kuyper argued that the elimination of common grace reduces theology to soteriology, which considers all institutions as instrumental to the singular value of salvation.²⁰ He quipped about the pietist who reasoned “that his father and mother, who were not among the elect, had lived only in order to bring him, the elect, into the world.”²¹ Only by recognizing God’s gracious work among all human beings—the regenerate and the unregenerate alike—can the soteriological reduction of theology be avoided. Kuyper contended that God created the world for his own glory and not for the salvation of sinners alone; God magnifies his glory not only by saving sinners, but by bringing the values latent in creation to full flower.

This standpoint provides space and place for *Gratia communis*. Only then can the root be exposed from which all the human arts and sciences in the fields of literature, medicine, law and natural science loom up. And so it becomes clear how there can be something of importance in the world for God apart from the elect.²²

Kuyper wrote his articles on common grace in *De Heraut* as an apology for his Reformed followers to leave the bulwarks he built up during the phase of the “antithesis” and to engage the common spheres of life for the glory of God.

The development of the concept of common grace was among Kuyper’s especial contributions to Reformed theology. Though cognizant that the concept derived from remarks of John Calvin, Kuyper noted that Calvin left that concept underdeveloped. He pointed to *Institutes* II.3.3 as among the clearest expressions of what Calvin understood by “common grace.”²³ In that section, Calvin argued that the virtues of non-Christians did not imply that the corruption of fallen humanity was only partial, but rather that God restrained the corruption of fallen humanity by grace. “But here it ought to occur to us that amid this corruption of nature there is some place for God’s

¹⁹ Kuyper attributed to “Methodism” the error of celebrating particular grace to the detriment of common grace. Cf. Abraham Kuyper, *Dictaten Dogmatiek: Locus de Magistratu, Consummatione Saeculi* (Kampen: Kok, 1910), 5:23ff. No doubt that Kuyper’s personal experience with revivalism, which contributed to his nervous breakdown in 1876, stands in the background of his criticisms of “Methodism.” Cf. Heslam, 40ff.

²⁰ Kuyper, *Dictaten Dogmatiek*, 5:23ff.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 5:23. My translation.

²² *Ibid.*, 5:24. My translation.

²³ Kuyper, *De Gemeene Gratie* 1:10.

grace; not such grace as to cleanse it, but to restrain it inwardly."²⁴ Elsewhere in the *Institutes*, Calvin spoke of a grace that not only restrains, but also prompts non-Christians to do good works. Referring in all probability to the philosophers of Greece and Rome, he counseled: "But if the Lord has willed that we be helped in physics, dialectic, mathematics, and other like disciplines, by the work and ministry of the ungodly, let us use this assistance" (II.2.16).²⁵ Abraham Kuyper appropriated both the negative and positive dimensions of Calvin's remarks and elaborated them beyond anything Calvin would have recognized. As Cornelius van der Kooi points out, the question whether Kuyper's appeal to Calvin is legitimate depends on the hermeneutical principles with which Calvin is interpreted; according to Kuyper, the task of the Reformed theologian is not so much to repeat Calvin as to bring his thought to fruition.²⁶ In any case, Kuyper recognized that the paucity of remarks on common grace left behind by Calvin meant that he would have to be more constructive here than elsewhere: "No other option remains to us except to pave our own way this time. . . ."²⁷

A danger inherent to the doctrine of common grace is its tendency to identify human achievement with divine ordination. Such an identification threatens to undermine the eschatological judgment of God against human culture. As van der Kooi remarks, "there has been no current in Dutch Protestant theology which has been so severely criticized for having neglected the eschatological reservation as the neo-Calvinist movement."²⁸ Kuyper flourished in the period before the First World War and many contemporary readers find his remarks on the promise of science and technology overly optimistic.

The unbridled optimism regarding the riches of Western civilization has subsided. In the light of the questions that technical and medical capacities have laid before us, more than ever we have reason to think again about the vulnerability of human individuals and their humanity, and not embrace every advance or enlargement of medical and industrial potential as desirable, or even necessary.²⁹

²⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 20., ed. John McNeill, tr. Ford Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 292.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 275.

²⁶ Cf. Cornelius van der Kooi, "A Theology of Culture. A Critical Appraisal of Kuyper's Doctrine of Common Grace" in *Kuyper Reconsidered: Aspects of his Life and Work*, ed. Cornelius van der Kooi and Jan de Bruijn (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1999), 96f.

²⁷ Kuyper, *De Gemeene Gratie* 1:9. My translation.

²⁸ Van der Kooi, 96.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 101.

There is no doubt that Kuyper shared in the cultural expectations of his time. More harmful than the stimulus the doctrine of common grace gave to Kuyper's optimism about the cultural possibilities of technical and medical progress was his use of that doctrine to bolster his cultural prejudices. There is a palpable tendency in Kuyper's reflections on common grace to garner divine sanction for cultural ideology. For example, Kuyper bolstered his contemporary historiographical prejudices, particularly his subscription to what Peter Heslam calls the myth of the "heliotropic" development of culture, by way of the doctrine of common grace.³⁰

Clearly, any cultural prejudices imported into Kuyper's theology should be subjected to stringent criticism. But does such stringency also require the expurgation of the doctrine of common grace itself from his theology? Here we must be careful. The doctrine of common grace does perhaps facilitate the theological justification of existing cultural prejudices. But that doctrine also opens a theological channel to voices outside the Christian antithesis. Recall that a primary positive function of the doctrine of common grace is to provide a rationale for Christians to learn from non-Christians. In the case of cultural prejudice, the doctrine of common grace, applied consistently, should prompt Christians to look for divine activity in all non-Christian cultures. Perhaps a vigorous doctrine of common grace would even open Christians to listen for divine judgment being spoken against them by non-Christians.

In summary, Kuyper's doctrine of common grace provides a theological ballast to particular grace. On the one hand, the doctrine prevents Christians from falling prey to a one-sided emphasis on salvation by ascribing inherent value to the so-called "secular" spheres of life such as the family, the state and the sciences. On the other, it provides a theological explanation for the obvious ethical, cultural, political, scientific and technological developments that Christians discover among the non-regenerate. In short, the doctrine of common grace supplies a theological rationale for Christians to enter into mutual dialogue with the "secular" world. But the conduit the doctrine of common grace opens to the secular world can also become the means by which cultural prejudices are imported into theology.

III. COMMON GRACE IN SCIENCE

Kuyper articulated his theology of science in many different works. Among his most mature expositions, however, was his *Common Grace in Science and*

³⁰ Cf. Heslam, 78f.

*Art.*³¹ Although Kuyper eventually incorporated it into his major three-volume work on *Common Grace*, the treatise was first published in 1905, several years subsequent to the original edition of the series.³² This treatise makes clear that he continued to wrestle with key issues in his theology of science even after the publication of the *Encyclopedia* (1893-1894) and the *Lectures on Calvinism* (1898). In particular, the five part series on science in *Common Grace in Science and Art* demonstrates his continuing ambivalence about the precise relationship between common and particular grace in the scientific sphere.

Kuyper opened *Common Grace in Science and Art* with the claim that science belongs to the order of creation, not to the order of redemption.³³ His argument for common grace in the sciences depended on the theological distinction between the orders of creation, which include, for example, the family, and orders that came about as a consequence of the fall and redemption, such as the state and the church. Kuyper defended the independence of the sciences from the church and the state on the basis of this distinction.³⁴ Reverting once again to an organic metaphor, Kuyper argued that although science had historically developed under the protection of both church and state, it was nevertheless not an offshoot of either, but possessed an independent root in creation.

Science is not a branch sprouting out from the stem of political service and even less a branch sprouting from the root of the church. Science possesses its own root, from which it springs, and from the stem, which rises from its particular root, it must put forth its branches and produce its fruit.³⁵

Kuyper explained the historical relation of the sciences to church and state by comparing science to a weak sprig that needed external support to grow to maturation.³⁶ The separation of the sciences from the church and the state takes place when the tree of science has grown into maturity and no longer requires their support. In any case, the full flowering of God's purposes required the differentiation of the spheres of the sciences, the church and the state. Science has "received an independent calling from the Creator" that it

³¹ Kuyper, *De Gemeene Gratie* 3:485-572. There is a partial translation in Bratt, 441-460.

³² Cf. James Bratt's textual explanation in Bratt, 442.

³³ Cf. Kuyper, *De Gemeene Gratie* 3:488.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 3:487ff.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3:488. My translation.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

would have had to fulfill apart from the drama of sin and grace and the divine ordinances that arose as a result of that drama.³⁷

The "scholastic" strand of the doctrine of common grace emerged prominently at the opening of *Common Grace in Science and Art* when Kuyper articulated his explanation for the human ability to comprehend the universe scientifically. In working out his proposal, Kuyper linked the concepts of the divine decree and the *imago dei* against the background of what may be termed a Christian Platonism.³⁸ Since everything that has been created can be "considered only as the issuance of that thinking of God," Kuyper reasoned, "God's thinking must be enclosed within all created things."³⁹ He then argued that though not all creatures can read the thoughts of God contained in the created world—a fish lives in water but cannot understand its composition or qualities⁴⁰—human beings can read the divine thoughts in creation because God created them in his image. Humanity has the ability to understand creation from the divine perspective—to read God's "blueprint" for creation—because God created human beings with the ability to think his thoughts after him. Kuyper emphasized that this ability derives not from particular grace, but from the "order of creation."⁴¹ He summarized his position as follows:

So then we get these three facts, which agree one with another: first, the full and rich clarity of his thoughts are in God from eternity; second, God has revealed, expressed, and embodied a rich fulness of his thoughts in the creation; and third, God created in the human being, as the bearer of his image, the capacity to understand, to grasp, to think and to put together as a whole those thoughts expressed in creation.⁴²

Kuyper concluded that "on these three things . . . rests the essence of human science."⁴³ Although this line of argument has been criticized as more speculative than biblical,⁴⁴ it should be said that Kuyper was addressing a question that still surfaces in the dialogue between theologians and scientists, namely, why should it be the case that human beings have the ability to understand the universe? If Paul Davies is correct that evolutionary biology

³⁷ Ibid., 3:488f. My translation.

³⁸ Cf. K. Veling, "Kuyper's Visie op de Wetenschap als Organisme: Kanttekeningen bij een Metafoor" in *Bezield Verband* (Kampen: Van den Berg, 1984), 285.

³⁹ Kuyper, *De Gemeene Gratie*, 3:490. My translation.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 3:491.

⁴¹ Ibid., 3:492.

⁴² Ibid. My translation.

⁴³ Ibid. My translation.

⁴⁴ Cf. Veling, 285.

cannot be expected to account for our extraordinary capacity to understand the universe scientifically,⁴⁵ then we must look elsewhere for an account. Kuyper put this quandary to apologetic ends, arguing that only the doctrine of creation provides "the sufficient ground" for "the remarkable correspondence" between the human mind and the universe.⁴⁶

Kuyper also contended that common grace counteracts the consequences of the fall both in and through science. On the one hand, common grace works *in* the sciences by tempering the effects of the fall on the human mind. Kuyper contended that the fall was devastating enough to destroy any correspondence between the human mind and the universe. Although it may seem that the darkening of human rationality brought about by the fall can be lifted only by particular grace, Kuyper held that the empirical evidence of scientific capacity among non-Christians demonstrates that common grace also mitigates against the cognitive effects of the fall.

Whoever does not take common grace into account can arrive at no other conclusion on his own than that *all* science, apart from the domain of the sacred, lives from appearance and self-deceit, and therefore must lead anyone who listens to its voice into deception. But the outcome shows that that is not how things stand.⁴⁷

Kuyper argued that only common grace can account for the dissonance between expectation and outcome. That non-Christians like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle produce science that Christians find useful can be explained only by common grace, which inhibits the effects of the fall and restores, if only in part, the ability of the human mind to grasp and understand the created world.⁴⁸ On the other hand, common grace counteracts the consequences of the fall *through* the sciences. "In the ordinance of God's common grace, science is also one of the most powerful means to combat sin as well as the error and misery that have flowed forth from sin."⁴⁹ Kuyper asserted that progress across a wide variety of scientific fields had tempered the effects of the fall by raising the standard of living, fostering social order, curing diseases, and managing natural forces.⁵⁰ Kuyper was not Panglossian about the benefits of scientific learning and technology; he acknowledged that they

⁴⁵ Cf. Paul Davies, "The Intelligibility of Nature" in *Quantum Cosmology and the Laws of Nature: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, ed. Robert Russell *et al.* (Vatican City: Vatican Observatory Publications, 1993), 153f.

⁴⁶ Abraham Kuyper, *Encyclopaedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid* (Kok: Kampen, 1909), 2:29.

⁴⁷ Kuyper, *De Gemeene Gratie* 3:497. My translation.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 3:497f.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 3:523. My translation.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 3:524.

may be misused.⁵¹ Progress in technology and the sciences represents an ambiguous channel for common grace, but he asserted that they represent a genuine channel nonetheless.

If Kuyper attributed so much to the working of common grace, what role did he reserve for particular grace in the sciences? In his fourth article on the role of common grace in science, Kuyper admitted that the Bible opposed "the science of the world" to "the true science."⁵² He attributed this distinction first and foremost to the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration—that is, to particular grace. The differentiation between the regenerate and the unregenerate must come to expression not only in society and politics, but also in the sciences. "If it is thus presupposed that there are two kinds of human beings, who differ in principle in their own ego and in their internal consciousness, then the scientific investigation of both cannot go hand in hand."⁵³ The distinction between the two kinds of humanity—regenerate and unregenerate—implies the distinction between two kinds of science. But Kuyper did not think that regeneration sufficed to bring about the distinction between two kinds of science. A second primary reason for the emergence of that distinction is the clarity that special revelation brings to the sciences.⁵⁴ The special revelation of God in the biblical witness provides the regenerated scientist with data that the unregenerated scientist either does not understand or does not value. Kuyper was subtle here, however; he sought to avoid the reductionism that he associated with "Methodism" by refusing any strict identification of special revelation with particular grace. Kuyper argued that though the light of special revelation had been provided for the benefit of those who had been regenerated by particular grace, the scientific principles that special revelation illuminates belong to the sphere of common grace, not particular grace.⁵⁵ In sum, Kuyper held that the distinction between Christian and non-Christian science arises both because of the regeneration of scientists by particular grace and because of the illumination that special revelation sheds on common grace in the sciences.

How, then, did Kuyper fix the precise boundary between Christian and non-Christian science? In "Abraham Kuyper's Philosophy of Science," Del Ratzsch supplies an excellent analysis of the fuzzy border that Kuyper drew between the two kinds of science.⁵⁶ Proposing a hierarchy of the sciences,

⁵¹ Ibid., 3:525f.

⁵² Ibid., 3:513.

⁵³ Ibid., 3:514. My translation.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 3:515f.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 3:516f.

⁵⁶ Del Ratzsch, "Abraham Kuyper's Philosophy of Science," *Calvin Theological Journal* 27 (1992):277-303.

Ratzsch argues that the division between Christian and non-Christian science widens at successive levels of that hierarchy. At the base of the hierarchy, Ratzsch locates the "exact sciences" of logical and quantitative analysis. He notes that Kuyper claimed in the *Encyclopedia* that, at this level, there is no split between Christian and non-Christian science. Ratzsch remarks, "This commonality is evidently due to common grace."⁵⁷ At the next level of the hierarchy, which he terms "natural science," Ratzsch detects a partial split. On the one hand, Kuyper maintained that Christians and non-Christians have an equal awareness of the natural law. On the other, he thought that Christians and non-Christians disagree about the origins of natural law. Disagreement emerges, Ratzsch contends, because Christians are conscious of divinely revealed facts about the origin, purpose and destiny of the world that non-Christians do not know.⁵⁸ At the third level in the hierarchy, "natural scientific theory," Ratzsch argues that the gap grows wider. Although Ratzsch wishes Kuyper had made his position clearer, he detects some allowance in Kuyper for agreement at the level of scientific theory.⁵⁹ But he contends that the dominant theme increasingly becomes the disagreement between Christian and non-Christian natural scientific theories. In large part, this split emerges because Christians and non-Christians construct scientific theories against the backdrop of radically opposed conceptions of the spiritual context of the natural sciences. The split becomes complete at the level of "broad sciences," that is, at the level of the integration of natural and human science into a comprehensive worldview.⁶⁰ Kuyper held that Christians cannot compromise with non-Christians over the validity of ultimate principles like materialism or pantheism; they must be prepared to reject such principles and develop an alternative vision of the unity of science. To sum up Ratzsch's argument in my own words, he argues that common grace prevails at the base of the scientific hierarchy and that particular grace prevails at its summit; the intermediate levels subsist at different locations on the spectrum between common and particular grace.

Ratzsch presents a plausible solution to the tension between common and particular grace in Kuyper's theology of science by locating their effects at different levels in the scientific hierarchy. Unlike Dooyeweerd, Ratzsch's exposition of Kuyper's philosophy of science by and large harmonizes the so-called "scholastic" epistemology that Kuyper put forward in the *Encyclopedia* with his concept of the antithesis between Christian and non-Christian

⁵⁷ Ibid., 287.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 288f.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 290f.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 296.

science. But Ratzsch also recognizes that not everything Kuyper said about the antithesis can be harmonized so readily. He notes, for example, that Kuyper sometimes claimed that every science is "permeated" by the antithesis, which suggests that the divisions run much deeper than the higher levels of the scientific hierarchy.⁶¹ Ratzsch admits that he is "not quite sure how to reconcile these statements with Kuyper's repeated insistences of commonality. . .," adding that they "may simply represent a tension in Kuyper's position. . . ."⁶² In fact, Kuyper himself seems to have vacillated in his writings on science between the harmonizing proposal that Ratzsch puts forward and the one-sided resolution in favor of the antithesis that Dooyeweerd commended.

In an ingenious article, K. Veling exposed the extent of Kuyper's ambivalence by attending to his use of organic metaphors in his writings on science.⁶³ Kuyper frequently likened the sciences to an organism. He liked, for example, to compare the development of science to a growing tree spreading branches from its trunk.⁶⁴ Veling pointed out, however, that Kuyper did not employ the metaphor in an unambiguous manner. In his *Encyclopedia*, Kuyper portrayed science as a single tree with both fruitful and unfruitful branches. The natural branches bear no fruit. The fruitful branches have been grafted onto the tree from an unnatural stock. Veling commented, "With this figure of speech Kuyper connects his conception of the single origin of science with his conviction that there are, through regeneration, two sorts of humanity and also two sorts of science"⁶⁵ This rendering of the metaphor favors the harmonizing solution to the tension between common and particular grace. In his *Lectures on Calvinism*, by contrast, Kuyper did not claim that the sciences spring out of creation like a tree from its seed. The tree springs forth, Veling noted, from faith.⁶⁶ The change in the roots of the tree produces a radical change in the sense of the metaphor as a whole; there are now independent *trees* of science, growing from different roots. Veling summarized, "If Kuyper speaks in the *Lectures on Calvinism* about two kinds of science, then he does that not in terms of 'grafting' but rather he sees different plants, each with its own roots."⁶⁷ This rendering favors the antithesis. Dooyeweerd clearly valued Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism* more than the *Encyclopedia* and, though cognizant of certain general dangers latent to the use of organic metaphors to describe the growth of the sciences, apparently

⁶¹ Ibid., 299.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Cf. K. Veling, 277-288.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 277.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 283. My translation.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 283f.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 284. My translation.

so did Veling. "Kuyper's metaphor fosters radicalness," he contended. "The antithesis between light and darkness may not be weakened to a difference in insight about certain points."⁶⁸ Strangely, Kuyper seems to have made use of both renderings of the metaphor in *Common Grace in Science and Art*, describing science as possessing its "own root" in the creation⁶⁹ but later contending that "what we need is a plant of science flourishing on a Christian root."⁷⁰

V. COMMON GRACE: A CHRISTOLOGICAL PROPOSAL

We have seen that the likening of science to an organism produced ambiguities in Kuyper's theology of science that commentators have sought to iron out. An unambiguous interpretation of Kuyper's theology of science seemingly demands a resolution that favors either common grace or the antithesis. But do not attempts to fix the precise relation between common and particular grace threaten to undermine the flexibility and functionality that the organic metaphor generates in his theology of science? Although it may be that Kuyper had simply become so attached to the metaphor of the organic that he failed to note its inadequacy to describe the relation between common and particular grace, may it not also be that Kuyper—a politician and a journalist as well as a theologian—avoided flattening out the metaphor because he appreciated its dynamism? Did Kuyper stress the interpretation favoring common grace when building bridges to the surrounding intellectual culture and the interpretation favoring the antithesis when building up Christian institutions?

I think that the creative tension between common and particular grace contributes to the continuing attraction of Abraham Kuyper's theology of science. On the one hand, Kuyper did not want to isolate scientists at Christian institutions from scientists at secular institutions. Although the precise boundary was fuzzy, Kuyper evidently envisioned a significant degree of overlap between secular and Christian science. The debacle that took place after Kuyper's death at the Synod of Assen (1926) demonstrates the intellectual stalemate between theology and natural science that arises when the boundary between the Christian and the non-Christian sciences becomes too firmly fixed by special revelation.⁷¹ On the other, Kuyper saw that Christians must oppose the philosophical worldviews that secular scientists develop out

⁶⁸ Ibid. My translation.

⁶⁹ Kuyper, *De Gemeene Gratie* 3:488.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 3:527. My translation.

⁷¹ Cf. Stellingwerff, Chapter Seven.

of scientific research. Although Kuyper could praise Charles Darwin along with Plato, Aristotle and Kant as "geniuses of the highest degree, that however much also not confessing Christians, have nevertheless expressed very deep thoughts and that possessed this brilliance not from themselves, but received their talents from the God that created them and made them capable of their conceptual work,"⁷² he nevertheless mistrusted evolutionary biology and sharply opposed what is now termed "social Darwinism." In like manner, although we may draw the boundaries differently, contemporary Christians are likewise obligated to sort out the legitimate scholarship in the works of neo-Darwinians like Richard Dawkins from extravagant claims about the purposelessness of the universe.⁷³

Of course, defending a creative tension in Kuyper's theology of science is not the same as defending an equivocation. And mounting such a defense also does not mean refraining from criticizing the kind of philosophical speculation that Dooyeweerd opposed in Kuyper's theology. In my view, the primary quandary facing contemporary Christian scientists and theologians who want to appropriate Abraham Kuyper's legacy is how to maintain a creative tension between common grace and particular grace without equivocating between them and without falling into speculation.

This quandary leads us to Abraham Kuyper's christology. As Stellingwerff makes clear, it was by way of his christology that Kuyper sought to synthesize common and particular grace—not only in politics, but also in science—during his final period of intellectual activity.⁷⁴ In the second volume of *Common Grace*, we already find him pointing out the christological unity of common and particular grace. Kuyper argued that since God both created and redeemed the world through Jesus Christ common and particular grace find their common root in Christ. Jesus Christ is

the root of common grace because he is *the firstborn of all creation* and, at the same time, the root of particular grace because he is *the firstborn from the dead*. There can be no doubt, therefore, that common grace and particular grace stand already in a very close connection due to their origin and that this connection lies in the *Christ*.⁷⁵

The christological unity of common and particular grace led Kuyper to prefer the likeness of a single tree with divergent branches to the likeness of

⁷² Kuyper, *De Gemeene Gratie* 3:498. My translation.

⁷³ Cf. Richard Dawkins, *A River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 132-3.

⁷⁴ Cf. Stellingwerff, 46-52.

⁷⁵ Kuyper, *De Gemeene Gratie* 2:645. My translation.

pillars of different origins that have been tied together. "On the other hand, it is a different situation in the case when two branches *from the same tree* become intertwined," Kuyper wrote. "Then both branches still have a common origin. They both have *one* root. Before they shot out, they both had a *single* life in the same stem."⁷⁶ Kuyper gave a wonderful twist to his metaphor here. The spheres of common and particular grace have a common root in Christ. After the fall, those spheres diverge like different branches, each responding differently to the effects of sin upon creation. But the branches grow together again, retaining their distinction, but forming in their interwovenness a unified canopy of grace.

In my view, this eschatological vision of the intertwining of common and particular grace suggests that the *antithesis* between Christian and non-Christian need not represent a sundering of the spheres, but a waxing and waning distinction. It is perhaps because the precise level of distinction between common and particular grace depends on the stage of the organic development of history that commentators have found it so difficult to fix precise boundaries. In any case, this rendering of the metaphor makes clear the origin and the destiny of common and particular grace: both arise and come to completion in Christ, the alpha and omega of God's purposes in creation.

The organic unity of common grace and particular grace in Jesus Christ also has particular implications for the theology of science. In my opinion, it suggests the distinction between Christian and secular science cannot be made absolute, but must remain relative. I believe the christological unity of common and particular grace relativizes the *antithesis* by preventing any separation between them; Kuyper's theology points toward the eschatological reunion of Christian and secular science.

Perhaps the tension in Kuyper's theology of science may best be maintained not by stressing the common roots of Christian and secular science in creation or by emphasizing the separation of the sciences fostered by the division of humanity by particular grace but by considering the growth and development of the sciences in light of God's providential purposes for creation. May a doctrine of providence centered in christology provide the best framework for considering the relationship between common and particular grace in the sciences? In *Common Grace in Science and Art*, Kuyper claimed that divine providence guides the development of the sciences. He put forward a scientific version of the classic slogan: *hominum confusione? Dei providentia!*

⁷⁶ Ibid. My translation.

Indeed, science does not come into existence as if one of the best architects had prepared a detailed blueprint for the building of this temple and then the following generations, by mutual agreement, calmly carried on the work of that original blueprint and so gradually made the temple rise on high. Instead, the entirety of the temple is built *without* a human blueprint and *without* human agreement. . . . And when now across the endless confusion it nevertheless appears that, in the course of the centuries, a temple is rising out of the apparently disorderly work that exhibits steady lines, manifests style, and already has us guessing how the entire building shall be completed, then it *must* be acknowledged and confessed, that all this work has been imperceptibly led and directed by an Architect and Artist that nobody sees.⁷⁷

This line of thinking need not ascribe the growth of the sciences to divine seeds planted in creation; Dooyeweerd rightly criticized such speculation as biblically ungrounded. It also need not succumb to speculation about necessary dialectical stages of development, although Veling may be right to suggest that Kuyper leaned closely toward Hegel in his ideas about the providential development of the sciences.⁷⁸ If we take the providential guidance of the sciences to be a temporal expression of God's eternal purposes in Christ, then that activity need not be restricted to any single period of salvation history, whether the creation, the federal covenants, or the redemption of the world. The providential guidance of the sciences also need not follow a schematic and rationalistic pattern. God is free in Christ to bring about his purposes in Creation as he sees fit. In sum, a christocentric doctrine of providence preserves both the commonality of creation and the particularity of redemption without fusing or sundering Christian and secular science.

V. CONCLUSION

I consider that Abraham Kuyper's christology furnishes the most promising fulcrum for maintaining the creative tension between Christian and secular science. A christocentric doctrine of providence allows for dynamic interaction between common grace and particular grace in the sciences without collapsing the tension between them. Moreover, the doctrine of providence allows for historical fluctuations in the balance between common grace and particular grace. Just as Stellingwerff noted that Kuyper empha-

⁷⁷ Kuyper, *De Gemeene Gratie* 3:494-5. My translation.

⁷⁸ Veling, 285.

sized one aspect of his thought more than the other according to the different stages of his career, contemporary Christians may feel it necessary to adjust the relative balance between common and particular grace differently in different situations. The precise location of the antithesis may move up and down the levels of the scientific hierarchy that Ratzsch analyzed according to God's providential action in history. That is, during some historical periods Christians may find that the antithesis-motif must predominate even in fundamental natural sciences and during other periods they may emphasize the effects of common grace even in so-called moral sciences. The doctrine of providence is also flexible enough to allow that the balance between the antithesis and common grace may differ in different disciplines. For example, the balance may have tipped toward common grace in the dialogue between Christian and secular physicists because of the resonance between 'Big Bang' cosmology and the Christian concept of creation but toward the antithesis in the dialogue between Christians and secular environmentalists because of the dissonance between strands of radical environmentalism and Christian eschatology.

Brad Allenby forcefully states the challenge of the contemporary environmental movement to the Christian worldview in his monograph, *Observations on the Philosophical Implications of Earth Systems Engineering*. If Allenby is correct when he claims that Christianity and environmentalism are conflicting ideologies—indeed conflicting theologies—⁷⁹ and that the conflict between them reaches all the way down to the level of purportedly objective and factual “environmental science,”⁸⁰ then Christians may find it necessary to emphasize the antithesis more than common grace in the environmental sciences today. The ethical implications of what Allenby terms “environmentalist eschatology,” for example, surely cannot be tolerated by Christians.⁸¹ Nevertheless, though the antithesis-motif may set the tone for the dialogue, the doctrine of common grace requires Christians environmentalists to remain critically engaged with their “secular” counterparts. The doctrine of common grace instructs Christians to listen for truths uttered on the other side of the antithesis, even by “greens” who consider Christianity to be the ideological enemy.

⁷⁹ Allenby refers to environmentalism as “the last Great Enlightenment ideology—perhaps even the greatest existing Christian heresy.” Cf. Brad Allenby, *Observations on the Philosophical Implications of Earth Systems Engineering*, Batten Institute Working Paper (Darden School of Business: University of Virginia, 2002), 79.

⁸⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, 76–105.

⁸¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 104.

In any event, the vision of common grace and particular grace as branches stemming from a christological root should become, I suggest, the primary rendering of the organic metaphor in Abraham Kuyper's theology of science. Kuyper leaves us with the wonderful image of a mighty and growing tree whose branches are weaving both apart and together to form a magnificent canopy of grace over God's creation.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Diogenes Allen, *Steps Along the Way: A Spiritual Autobiography*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2002. Pp. 134. \$13.95.

Despite having written history's most famous autobiography, Augustine was not normally given to talking very much about himself in his other works. In the hundreds of pages of his sermons on the Psalms or the Gospel of John, we garner fewer personal facts about their author than we would in an average sermon of a Protestant minister given to illustrating Scripture from his or her own personal experience. Yet what Augustine says and how he says it in those writings do tell us a lot about Augustine, about his heart and mind. In what he is thinking about and how he thinks it, he is revealed. In that process we find out something important about ourselves too, for our hearts and minds are just as personally engaged in what he is saying as his are.

It would be wise for the reader to keep this in mind when reading Diogenes Allen's spiritual autobiography. There are actually not a great many autobiographical facts here, and not many extended personal narratives, at least as autobiographies normally go. Often he spends as much time reflecting on the lives of people he has met and read about. The major, middle portion of the book brings to print Allen's long time and profound reading of the spirituality of the Anglican poet and priest George Herbert. Still, Allen doesn't remain hidden; much of his heart and mind emerges in this book, and one learns much about one's own heart and mind as well reading Allen. *Steps along the Way* is valuable because Allen avoids both horns of the inevitable dilemma of many autobiographies: i.e., either fitting one's life story into a cliché ridden narrative that everybody has heard before, or else the self aggrandizement of demonstrating, in John Donne's words, "that there can be none of that kind, of which he is, but he." Some autobiographies even manage to fall on both of those horns.

Steps along the Way is a series of reflections by someone who consciously recognizes that he is much nearer to the end than the beginning or the middle of his life. Allen's reflections are not an "it is finished"; rather, they witness to a profound and growing awareness that life really has been, and still is a journey. On such a journey nearing its end, one might not always be able to say with self satisfaction that everything has come out right. Allen's work therefore carries an authenticity not otherwise found in the testimonies of the young, the naive, or the untested. Allen offers valuable guidance for the reader who encounters evils unresolved, daunting intellectual challenges to faith, unclear paths, and both successes and regrets. He even has

some very important things to say about what success and regret in life really amount to.

Many spiritual autobiographies try to be inspiring to their readers by means of example, but they often fail because they distance themselves from the reader and place spirituality beyond the reach of ordinary people. This could have been one of them. After all, how much could most of us really see of ourselves in a second generation Greek-American-Rhodes Scholar-Princeton Seminary Professor for thirty-five years without fantasy or fatuous abstraction? What we *do* see fortunately here is something very important about what it means to be a lost child of God, whom God is seeking and trying very hard to bring back, and how God works to bring us back. I suspect that this story is what is most important for the reader. But, as a long time friend I am also happy to say that to have heard this story is to have heard Allen again offer something worthwhile to his reader, which has always been his greatest strength.

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Evans, Abigail Rian. *The Healing Church: Practical Programs for Health Ministries*. Cleveland: United Church Press, 1999. Pp. 262. \$23.95.

"The fullness of time for the church to recover its healing ministry is now"—This is the message of a timely and important book by Abigail Rian Evans, Charlotte W. Newcombe Professor of Practical Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary. In this book Evans does far more than remind us of the church's historic healing ministry. She explains why conditions are right for the church to reemerge as a major health care provider and to reassert its partnership with hospitals and medical professionals. These conditions include the increasing prevalence of chronic illnesses, the inability of our fragmented health care system to meet many of the challenges associated with chronic conditions, and the mounting scientific evidence of the relationship between religious involvement and good health. Additionally, Evans provides examples and advice that can help pastors and other church leaders initiate or expand health ministries.

Evans correctly points out that our society no longer can rely on an acute care model that emphasizes disease and illness. We must develop a new model or expand our existing model into one that also gives attention to the prevention and management of illnesses. Many leaders in medicine and health care who study the demographic and economic forces that will shape health care in the 21st century share this view. They recognize the need for

such programs and the inability of medical institutions and professionals to meet this need unless partnerships with religious congregations and other community institutions are formed.

In the first chapter, "The Church's Historic Role in Health and Healing," Evans discusses Jesus' healing ministry and the church's view of its role in health and healing from the apostolic period to the 20th century. Chapter two examines the changing nature of illness and the current crisis in health care. Although deeply concerned about the shortcomings of the American health care system, Evans recognizes the opportunity this crisis presents for the church. Chapter three addresses the challenge of discerning and defining authentic health and healing ministries. Evans is critical of faith healers who take only one instrument Christ used in his healing ministry and claim it as the sole means for healing. Here and throughout the book she insists that an authentic healing ministry includes faith *and* medicine.

The next four chapters are devoted to a discussion of the types of authentic health ministries churches can offer. The first of these, covered in Chapter four, includes devotional, sacramental, and liturgical practices. Although Evans believes churches should work closely with medical professionals and health care institutions, she considers worship and prayer essential to any healing ministry. In Chapter five she discusses educational programs that can serve three constituencies: local church members, health care professionals, and the community at large. Through these educational programs churches can facilitate health promotion activities and help individuals understand and gain greater control over important health decisions.

In Chapter six Evans calls on churches to offer ministries of support for all who are touched by illness, but particularly the elderly and their caregivers. She also urges churches to perform a prophetic role in working to assure that all persons receive adequate health care. Chapter seven explains how churches can deliver wholistic health care. Much of this chapter is informed by Evans' experience as director of National Capital Presbytery Health Ministries in the 1980s.

The final three chapters provide information on specific programs and steps churches can take to develop health ministries. Chapter eight provides an overview of parish nursing, a relatively new specialization that prepares nurses to work with clergy to coordinate health ministries. In chapter nine Evans offers practical advice and suggestions for pastors and other church leaders interested in establishing a health ministry. The final chapter is devoted to descriptions of effective programs that Evans hopes will inspire and energize readers. Included are health ministries that involve parish nurses, lay health promoters, volunteer caregiver teams, respite care, health education classes, and direct health services.

Pastors and other church leaders will find Evans' book an inspiring and useful guide. She not only makes a compelling case for the church to become a force for health and healing, but also shows us how this can be achieved.

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Lapsley, Jacqueline E. *Can These Bones Live?: The Problem of the Moral Self in the Book of Ezekiel*. New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000. Pp. 208. \$93.35.

Lapsley based this monograph on her dissertation from Emory University. She examines the degree to which Ezekiel envisions an autonomous moral self. Interdisciplinary in approach, the author uses paradigms from the field of ethics in her analysis of the book of Ezekiel. She does not posit that these were categories known to the original author. Rather, as a study in contemporary theology, she uses these categories to flesh out the assumptions that drive the moral discourse in the book. She sums up the moral problem in the book of Ezekiel in her second chapter, "... In Ezekiel it is not the *unit* of responsibility but the *possibility* of human responsibility *at all* that is brought into question by such a starkly sovereign portrait of God."

The monograph is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter serves two purposes. First, it explains ethical categories used in the analysis. Second, it sets out the author's assumptions about the date, authorship and unity of Ezekiel. Chapter two surveys current discussions of the ethics of Ezekiel. Chapter three places Ezekiel within the context of moral discourse evident in other biblical texts, with primary focus on Genesis 2-3 and Jeremiah. Chapters four through six turn specifically to an analysis of Ezekiel. In chapter four, Lapsley explores the tension in the book between texts that presume an autonomous moral self, and those that presume humans are incapable of moral action, without divine intervention. While both views stand side-by-side in Ezekiel, the latter view is the most prominent. Chapter five looks at how this tension is part of a larger shift away from viewing action as that which determines a person's morality, to knowledge and memory as the key elements. This chapter ends with a long discussion of shame as an essential component of moral knowledge. Chapter six takes up the moral self in the oracles of salvation that end the book, again demonstrating the centrality of knowledge as determinative for moral identity. Chapter seven provides an excellent summary of the book's conclusions, and then explores the implications of these conclusions for both further study of the book of Ezekiel, as well as for contemporary theology.

The book has much to recommend it. First, it is highly readable, and,

although the author provides adequate footnoting and bibliography, it is not overly documented, as many dissertations can be. Second, it provides fresh insight into some of the most difficult ideas within the book for contemporary theology. For example, the concept of shame is prominent in Ezekiel. To modern ears, shame can seem like a negative concept. By placing shame within the parameters of moral discourse, however, Lapsley provides a context within which such a concept has a positive function.

My critiques of the book are few. First, I would have liked to have seen how this moral discourse plays out against a larger ancient near eastern backdrop. I suspect that Ezekiel's dim view of human initiative reads more like the anthropology of some Mesopotamian literature than what is preserved in the rest of the Bible. Second, I found the argument difficult to follow in places, especially in its use of ethical categories. This is not a book for a novice in the field, because it presumes basic literacy with ethical and biblical concepts. Lastly, although Lapsley notes at the beginning of the book that she is not concerned with whether her analysis reflects the thought of the original author, the rest of her book is written as if it does. The line between positing an original meaning and providing a contemporary hermeneutic was often blurred.

These critiques are minor, however, and do not affect the overall assessment of the book. I would highly recommend this book to anyone struggling with the moral assumptions and implications of the book of Ezekiel.

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Sang Hyun Lee and Allen C. Guelzo, eds. *Jonathan Edwards in Our Time: Jonathan Edwards and the Shaping of American Religion*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999. Pp. 214. \$18.00.

This book consists of a number of essays that were first delivered at a conference held in Philadelphia in October 1996. The flier for the conference showed a portrait of Jonathan Edwards dressed in Puritan preaching garb. The background of the flier, however, pictured present-day Philadelphia. That picture serves as the book's back cover. The conjunction of images points to the conference theme, and thus the book's goal of relating the thought of the eighteenth-century figure to contemporary, indeed perennial concerns. In his conference keynote address, which is printed in the book, "The Perennial Jonathan Edwards" John E. Smith states: "Our continuing efforts to study and interpret Edwards' thought should always be motivated by a concern for those resources to be found in his ideas which help us to deal

with the recurrent problems facing religion on the contemporary scene. Ours should be no antiquarian concern aimed at preserving the past, but a creative application in the present of the insights bequeathed to us by so monumental a thinker." This goal calls to mind the kinds of interpretative work on Edwards suggested by Robert W. Jenson, a contributor to the conference, in his 1988 book, *America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards*. There Jenson writes, "But room is left for another kind of interpretation, that evaluates Edwards' views not only by their originality or power or historical fruitfulness, but by their intention of truth. One may ask not only, 'Why was Edwards great?' but 'Was Edwards right?' One may ask not only, 'Was Edwards right?' but 'Is he?'" Thus the title *Edwards in Our Time* reflects not only interest in the current state of Edwardsian historiography, but also contains the bold suggestion that Edwards has something to say to us today.

The book is divided into an editor's preface, an introduction, the conference keynote address, and four sections, with two essays in each section. The sections are: God, Being and Nature; Ethics; Preaching and Revival; and Eschatology. A different scholar writes each chapter, and Harry S. Stout's excellent introduction gives a helpful summary of each of them. For the purpose of this review, only a few of the chapters, of particular interest for readers of this journal, will be noted.

The book shows the vitality of the work scholarship directed toward applying Edwards' philosophical theology to modern theological concerns. Sang Lee, in an essay that covers similar ground as his important 1988 book *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, convincingly shows how Edwards' Trinitarian ontology is a useful resource for contemporary theological reflection. Similarly, Robert Jenson applies Edwards' doctrine of the Trinity and the related idea of harmony to the important, though neglected, topic of eschatology. These and other essays by Stephen Daniel, Roland Delattre, Allen Guelzo, and Gerald McDermott convey and contribute to the fruitful scholarship applying Edwards' thought to contemporary discussions in theology and ethics.

The weakest section of the book is "Preaching and Revival." The essays in this section are not in the same league as the others. This weakness is indicative of a problem in the Edwards scholarship. The excellent work on Edwards as a perennial philosopher/theologian/ethicist fostered by the Yale University Press project and conferences such as "Edwards in Our Time" needs to be carried over and applied to Edwards as preacher and pastor, i.e. scholarship for the church as well as the academy. There is a modest, though useful, corps of such scholarship by a few writers including Richard Lovelace, John Gerstner, John Piper, and Gerald McDermott. However, there is room

for much more work to be done. *Edwards in Our Time* points us in the right direction. It demonstrates the fruitfulness of not only examination, but also application of the thought of such a magisterial thinker, even while it inadvertently suggests where more scholarship is needed.

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Armstrong, Richard Stoll, *Are You Really Free?: Reflections on Christian Freedom*. Lima, Ohio: Fairway Press, 2002. Pp. 203. \$15.95.

Occasionally a book appears on the scene that is decisively and deeply rooted in the fullness and richness of the long, broad sweep of biblical and historical tradition, while clearly and crisply focused on the specifics of everyday reality as experienced by ordinary people. A book that is alive with incisive biblical reflection, resonant with the best of traditional and contemporary theological pursuit, in touch with all of church history, yet poised to illumine, inform, and guide the faith journeys of the faithful at this particular point in history. A book that is unapologetically scholarly, yet disarmingly practical. A book that can expand the knowledge of even the widely read pastor, yet speak with clarity to the average lay person. Such a book is Dick Armstrong's *Are You Really Free?* In nineteen chapters, ten to twelve pages each, Armstrong explores a dimension of Christian freedom in highly readable, thought-provoking, challenging and inspiring paragraphs, followed by a series of questions sure to provoke animated discussions. This book is surely timely in light of 9-11 and what has unfolded since then.

Any systematic theology has, it would seem, a cornerstone, a starting point, a central and overarching theme around which all-else orbits. For Martin Luther it was *justification by faith*, the fruit of biblical exploration and personal experience of the gift of forgiving grace. For John Calvin it was the *sovereignty of God*, the result as well of scholarship and personal spiritual journeying. For the Roman Catholic Church it was the *supremacy of the church*, guardian of truth and order. More recently a *theology of hope* comes to mind, or *feminist theology*, or *liberation theology*. The more recent examples forge an artful blend of biblical insight and sensitivity to real life. Daring to place Armstrong in such esteemed company, he crafts a comprehensive, inclusive, artfully woven (if not technically systematic) theology around *Christian freedom*.

An example of how the author connects penetrating biblical study, timely reference to church history, and illumination from psychology—then focused with laser-like implication for today's believer—is found in chapter eight. After

a remarkably concise and compact review of the history of confession in the life and liturgy of the church across nineteen hundred years, interwoven with psychological insights, sprinkled with a touch of humor, Armstrong focuses on a single word, "confess," referencing both its Hebrew and Greek roots. He then artfully unpacks that word to reveal its delicate interweaving of three basic threads—confession of *sins*, confession of *faith*, and confession as *praise*. Suddenly confession is released from its often heavy and awkward use in so many churches to become a matter of celebration, liberation, healing and call to action.

But even more compelling than Armstrong's rich blend of biblical study, theological reflection, apt psychological reference, and wonderful literary allusions is his willingness to be thoroughly available, open and vulnerable to his readers. He is clearly a believer speaking to believers, a pilgrim in dialogue with fellow pilgrims along the way. The voice that speaks through the pages of this book is clearly one which listens carefully, prayerfully and lovingly. His is the voice of a pastor. Indeed, in chapter seven, after a quote from one of his delightfully broad variety of sources, a Turkish proverb that declares, "If speech is silver, listening is gold," he retells a portion of Taylor Caldwell's *The Listener*. A wise old man named John Godfrey, shortly before his death, builds a quiet sanctuary where people can come to share their troubles privately, assured that someone will always be there to listen. Though the all-present Listener in Godfrey's sanctuary is Jesus, Armstrong writes, perhaps in the name and service of that Listener, with an open, sensitive, empathic ear.

Armstrong has been a pastor, lecturer, professor, preacher and inspirational speaker across four decades. He speaks from a wealth of experience. He speaks with persuasiveness and authority. Yet he seems most comfortable walking *with* his readers, as he has over the years with his parishioners and students. He shares himself as a "work in progress," one with whom "God is not finished yet," who "presses on toward the upward call," who struggles with matters of faith and faithfulness just as his readers do. Nowhere is "walking with" more beautifully expressed than in chapter fourteen, in which he addresses the issue of *pride* in the quest for Christian freedom. "I have wrestled with this subject of pride ever since I first became a minister," he confesses. "I have continually asked God to give me the right kind of pride . . . I ask God to forgive me for seeking the praise of others instead of striving to please God."

One can endorse a book no more enthusiastically than to urge its reading, not only by individuals but, perhaps especially, for groups of church leaders, study groups, house churches, circles of friends, and the like. Churches poised for rapid growth and those struggling to survive, urban congregations and

those in a small town or rural setting, faith communities with an emphasis on spiritual deepening and those with a commitment to social witness would each find in *Are You Really Free?* words to comfort and challenge, inspire and guide, teach and mentor on the journey toward Christian freedom.

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Blair, Christine Eaton. *The Art of Teaching the Bible: A Practical Guide for Adults*. Louisville: Geneva Press, 2001. Pp. 138. \$12.95.

This little handbook may come to have a big influence on Bible teaching in Presbyterian and other churches. It integrates recent learning theory and ideas about biblical interpretation in a way that is intelligent and well organized. With its deft allusions to dozens of people influential to the field of Christian education, this book will not insult the scholar; but neither will it intimidate the church teacher looking for useful information on how to conduct a Bible study.

As a premise, Blair states that teaching Bible study is an art. The goal of the “artist/teacher” is to help learners make meaningful connections between the biblical text and the “text” formed by their lives. Toward that end, she arranges her guidance into five chapters. The first reviews four ways people have beheld the Bible—as engendering an encounter with the Holy God, as engendering communal identity, as calling for social justice, as inspiring personal spiritual growth. Blair’s taxonomy is reminiscent of that used by Seymour and Miller in their popular *Contemporary Approaches to Christian Education* (1982). She concludes that the teacher “will want to use all four models”—which is consistent with her premise that the paramount goal of education is “creating meaning,” and the prevailing view that compounding paradigms leads to a net increase in meaning.

The second chapter reviews learning theory. For example, she says adults learn best when they are afforded respect, their prior experience is valued, and learning is self-directed. Such principles are not startling, but Blair expresses them with a rare clarity and attention to nuance that draw on her years of teaching and directing the Doctor of Ministry program at Austin Presbyterian Seminary. She also raises some complex questions, such as whether “needs-based learning” feeds a consumerist ethos.

The third chapter presents an outline for conducting Bible studies, her “five Rs model.” The five steps are: *remembering* what people already know or think they know about the text, *revisiting* the text “using professional tools”;

reflecting critically by bringing together the biblical text and the "text" of human lives; *reinterpreting* the text through some act of imagination, such as "a short sermon, a role-play, a skit, a letter or a pantomime"; and *responding* to the text, whether through personal silent reflection or a "covenant" to take group action. She notes it is important for Bible study both to begin and to end with prayer, thus to be open to the wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

The author then abstracts from her "five Rs model" three underlying elements that any good Bible study could contain, even if the teacher does not follow the steps just given. These elements are "storytelling and disciplined imagination"; "critical-analytical reflection"; and "action." The last refers both to liturgical rituals and social ministry. In the final chapter, she lists "ten teaching tips" that reiterate or expand on points she has made before.

Blair's implicit theological position is hard to label. She voices feminist concerns, but nowhere advocates feminist practices of "reading against the grain." The Bible is referred to as the word of God, or even the Word of God. She voices liberationist concerns, but is not inciting Presbyterians to overthrow the system. Her examples of responsive action are drawn from the common experiences of churches, which include writing letters to Congress and working in the proverbial soup kitchen. Put most positively, one can say that Blair mollifies conflicting perspectives within her denomination, thus giving her guide wider applicability and even making it an act of reconciliation.

One thing is clear: she wants very much to see the "tools" of critical scholarship utilized more in churches. She is confident this scholarship can be made relevant, without its being divisive or destructive of faith. She does not delve into the sorts of cases by which such confidence may be tested. What, for example, would critical scholarship say about the historicity of the Resurrection (more than can be covered in Sunday School class), and how should the teacher guide in this discussion? On such questions a well-built teaching model may founder. In Bible study, like nowhere else, rapprochement can be revealed as tenuous, and then the prayer for wisdom becomes more plaintive.

One may ask for what target audience this handbook is intended. I surmise it will apply most readily to groups of people who already have some knowledge of the Bible (otherwise her first step of "remembering" makes no sense); who are Protestant (since "basic Protestant principles" are said to apply); who are of mainline denominations (for the phrase "most mainline denominations" is used more than once as warrant to think or do something); who are somewhat educated, or at least able to work on their own with "research tools"; and who are probably, judging by some examples she gives, middle class or richer, politically left of center, and not Southern Baptists. These remarks are not meant as criticism, but simply as indicators of the book's horizon.

Readers must judge for themselves the book's central metaphor that teaching is art. The author's commitment to it is patent. She begins and ends each chapter with reference to the "artist/teacher." But after it has been qualified that the teacher is certainly not an artist in the sense that students are blank canvases or lumps of clay, we are left with analogies such as this: "just as some paintings use more yellow or more blue, so too the artist/teacher will find that different classes need more of one educational element than another. . . ." The book neither discusses Schleiermacher's use of the term "rules of art," nor strives for in-depth analysis of artistic creativity.

Besides all that, the act of teaching needs no borrowed dignity. Despite her insistence on the metaphor, the verb she uses most often—whether referring to human teachers or "God the great Artist/Teacher"—is the verb *to guide*. In her depiction, that is really what teachers do most—they guide. That is why this book is subtitled: "a practical guide for adults." And as a guide, it is supremely clear and intelligent.

Russell Haitch

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Larry Eskridge and Mark A. Noll, eds. *More Money, More Ministry: Money and Evangelicals in Recent North American History*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. Pp. 429. \$20.00.

Symposia, almost without exception, are uneven and vary in depth and quality depending on the writer. Not so this volume. Every chapter is well-researched, skillfully edited, and engagingly presented. The contributors, some of whom are well-known scholars such as Mark Noll, Dean Hoge, and Joel Carpenter, recount the changing attitudes evangelical Christians have had toward money, the contrasting and not always scrupulous techniques they have utilized to raise it, and the mutating patterns of giving that have characterized them since the late nineteenth century. The sixteen themes addressed include the impact of the national economy, corporate capitalism, consumerism, and advertising on evangelicals. They derive from papers originally presented at a late 1998 consultation on evangelicals and money held under the auspices of Wheaton College. Readers should understand that although some sectors of the evangelical community and some important themes are not discussed, the contributors do cover an impressive array of individuals and groups—all of whom to one degree or another have been identified with the evangelical movement—denominations, revivalists, women's and mission sending organizations, as well as a number of parachurch agencies. Some of these have justly garnered admiration while others

have brought shame and scandal. One example of the former is, of course Billy Graham, whose early policies about handling money have protected him from accusations of avarice or mismanagement. Another commendable example—to which a whole chapter is devoted—is the China Inland Mission founded by James Hudson Taylor, whose financial history is a bit more cloudy, yet forthrightly analyzed. Though billed as a “faith mission,” the first of the “faith” missions which forbade Hudson or any of his missionaries to ever solicit funds, the story of how Taylor and others obtained the financial support they needed is a fascinating study of the humanness of even the most inspired intentions.

No less important for review—in fact more so today—have been the disreputable ways some evangelicals—especially some revivalists and TV preachers—have grubbed for money, several whose ministries are examined in detail. Without doubt, however, the most egregious case of evangelical duplicity is that of the recently exposed “New Era Foundation” which bilked hundreds of individuals, institutions, and non-profit organizations for more than \$350 million. Sadly N.E.F. appealed to human greed and used a cleverly devised Ponzi scheme that should have been recognized for what it was by any experienced institutional head or knowledgeable financial officer. Thomas C. Berg’s critique of this Philadelphia-based scam is thorough, fascinating, and astonishing to read.

Had I chosen the title for this book, I would have made it an interrogatory—*More Money, More Ministry?* Notwithstanding, this is an informative and intriguing study that should be read by everyone who is concerned with how Christians should and *should not* relate to money. My hope is that another consultation will soon follow, one that will fill in some of the gaps in the evangelical story as well as trace and analyze the history of other major Christian and non-Christian groups in North America regarding how they have raised and used money in their ministries.

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Schroeder, Christoph O. *History, Justice, and the Agency of God: A Hermeneutical and Exegetical Investigation on Isaiah and Psalms*. Boston: Brill, 2001. Pp. 236. \$80.

This Princeton Seminary thesis directed by Patrick Miller takes on the profoundly intractable issue of *how* “God acts in history.” The book, bearing many of the marks of style reflecting a dissertation, is divided into two parts. First, Schroeder offers an extended, somewhat repetitious theoretical analysis of the way in which *modern* notions of history have compromised the *universal*

governance of history by the God of Israel in order to present and interpret history as an arena for *human agency* and for *human autonomy*. The argument makes some subtle and interesting twists as "Greek Historiography" and "Biblical Historiography" are shown as allies in making a critique of, and offering an alternative to, modern views. The operational signal for this argument is the much-repeated term "*Reality*" in which Schroeder does not want the claims of God's direct agency in history fuzzed over or softened by any of the characteristic ploys of modern hermeneutics, including a "turn to language." This argument is an important one even though it is repetitious and loaded with jargon that makes it more dense than necessary.

The second part of the book seeks to exposit a "realistic, universal" understanding of history as an arena of God's sovereign action by way of careful, detailed exegesis. Giving attention to texts from Isaiah, the focus of textual study is a series of lament Psalms around the question of *how* [the author's word] God intervenes to transform the "plea" of such Psalms to "praise." The outcome of the analysis is that God intervenes *directly* and without communal or institutional mediation in the life of a needy, petitioning person. That intervention evokes a new circumstance of joy, thanks, and praise.

While the focus of the discussion is eventually upon Psalm seven, along the way Schroeder takes up major interpretative questions. (a) He does a careful review of Psalm study, including: 1) The hypothesis of Begrich concerning the possibility of a salvation oracle; 2) The hypothesis of Lindström concerning temple presence, and 3) The hypothesis of Beyerlin concerning trial by ordeal.

Schroeder assumes, following Miller, that the lament Psalm has its appropriate context in neither community practice nor institutional usage. The Psalm, rather, is a direct encounter and confrontation between God and the speaker, characteristically in and through the night, so that newness comes to voice at dawn.

(b) Schroeder presents a careful review of Assyrian and Babylonian laments that are parallel to those of Israel, but notices that at the crucial point, unlike in the laments in Israel, there is institutional mediation. By contrast, the Israelite lament appeals directly to YHWH the judge who, by means of direct "vision," makes all things new.

The analysis of laments is immensely important. In my judgment, however, the argument offered leads to conclusions that I think are mostly contained in the premise of "direct experience" and thus do not necessarily follow from the argument. I believe that Schroeder has well argued from a *theological* perspective that in principle screens out the tricky *contextual*,

sociological questions. I have no reservation about his theological judgment. The refusal to consider contextual dimensions, however, does not mean that there are no mediating factors. Thus in this judgment his conclusion about the *universal reality* of YHWH as the real actor in history seems to me something of a *non sequitur* from his analysis. Specifically: 1) Schroeder's method participates in the long-standing dilemma of Old Testament studies. He spends great energy on cultural parallels from the Prayer of Tikulti-Ninurta and Sargon's Letter so that the parallels are illuminating. But, then, just at the crucial point, he breaks off the parallel, denies commonality, and asserts the peculiarity of Israel's practice:

There is a structural analogy between the description of the reversion of the evil against its agents in the incantation ceremonies and the way it is described in the psalm texts quoted above. In both cases, the deity is involved in bringing it about. However, whereas in the *incantations* the reversion is enacted verbally or manually by the *āšipu*, the representative of the gods Ea and Marduk, in the *psalms* it is YHWH who reverts the evil against its agents. This reversion is not enacted ritually.

Schroeder follows in a long line of scholars who seek to have it both ways. If Israel's prayer is "not ritually enacted," then the parallel is not important.

2) Schroeder has an intriguing footnote on p. 191: "Maybe from a modern perspective it is enacted *symbolically*. From the ancients' perspective laid out above, it is an *effective* annihilation of evil."

The contrast between *symbolically* and *effective* seems to me most problematic, for the contrast does not allow the rich, generative power of *symbol* as *effective means*. This suggests that the author wants a simplistic "effectiveness" that is disconnected from social reality that I do not think is possible. After all, even Mowinckel understood cultic action to be "*wirklich*."

3) Schroeder bets a great deal on genre but against the weight of scholarship refuses to recognize that genre is a rhetorical strategy of social consensus through which the *real* is socially mediated. If divine rescue is reliably and consistently given in this genre, it seems most plausible to me that all these experiences are *experienced* and *articulated* in some constant social practice.

The hidden polemic of this book seems to be the assumption that if God's rule is mediated—either by human agency or by institution or by community—then God's *real, universal* rule is compromised or softened. But this is a most doubtful assumption. As the reader will see, I have found this book interesting, suggestive, and stimulating, a bold engagement with a difficult

and important issue. My reservations do not amount to a faulting of the book, and readers will find it a stimulating study inviting an important reconsideration of an old question. The polemic I cite from Schroeder is no fault of the author, but only testifies to the intractability of the issue. Schroeder has offered an engaging address to the issue that continues, lamentably, to be intractable. His bold address of it is exactly the way in which scholarship advances, one hard night's-struggle at a time, always awaiting the dawn.

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Carter, Warren. *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001. Pp. 249. \$25.00.

Warren Carter is a rising star in New Testament scholarship, and particularly in Matthean studies. He has focused his energies on two issues. Methodologically, Carter has advocated "audience criticism," which is similar to literary or narrative criticism in that it interprets passages according to the way in which the "implied reader" (i.e., the reader we infer from the text itself) would understand them. But it differs from the concern with the "implied reader" in narrative criticism insofar as it attends more seriously than is typically the case with narrative critics to the socio-cultural knowledge (historical background) that such a reader would possess and would bring to bear in the interpretation of passages. Materially, Carter has pursued the Roman imperial background in his study of Matthew's Gospel. Carter combines these methodological and material interests in the present volume. He thus constantly argues that even where no explicit reference to Rome appears, the audience envisioned by the text comes with a kind of background that would cause them to read passages in such a way as to find therein elements of resistance to Rome.

Carter rightly bemoans the almost exclusive attention Matthean scholars have given to the Jewish background of the Gospel. While acknowledging that such Jewish background is significant, Carter insists that the relationship of Matthew's readers to the Roman imperial government is equally important. He describes in broad strokes major aspects of life in the Roman Empire and shows how Matthew's Gospel offers a Christian resistance to the empire in terms of an alternative theological conviction which insists that the world does not belong to Rome but to God and to an alternative social vision which rejects might and force in favor of a community of servanthood and selfless submission to the good of others.

One is amazed at the breadth of Carter's treatment of Matthean passages and themes in his attempt to identify resistance to Roman imperialism. He deals not only with the obvious passages, such as those describing the Herods (2:1-23; 14:1-9) or those that deal with Pilate (27:11-26), but he also treats themes such as Christology and with passages like Mt. 1:21 ("to save his people from their sins") or 11:28-30 ("take my yoke upon you") or the fulfillment quotations of 1:23 and 4:15-16 which are usually read against a Jewish rather than Roman background.

While Carter is practically encyclopedic in his knowledge of Roman background, meticulous in his research, and original in his arguments, he tends at points to overreach. I will mention three particulars.

First, Carter tends to connect the religious leaders with the Roman imperial government. He does so by describing the religious authorities as belonging to the "retainer class," which had a stake in maintaining the status quo and which forged an informal alliance with the Roman governors. But while this scenario might have obtained for the high-priestly Sadducean party, it is not clear that such would have been the case with the Pharisees, who offered primary opposition to Jesus in Matthew's Gospel. This connection allows Carter to argue that the various passages that describe the religious authorities address resistance to Roman imperialism.

Second, Carter claims that Jesus' healings involve deliverance from Roman oppression. Thus, "even in modern times we have witnessed in television reports the brutal impact of imperial power on people through trauma and rendering them speechless and paralyzed . . . sociopsychological approaches to demon possession observe the phenomena of trauma, speechlessness, and paralysis in situations of social tension, economic exploitation, and colonial domination." It is, of course, unlikely that the original readers of Matthew's Gospel would have been aware of these sociopsychological connections revealed by modern cultural and sociological studies.

Third, Carter interprets the passion narrative in such a way that the Jewish crowds and, to a large extent, the religious authorities bear no responsibility for Jesus' death in favor of a construal that places almost all the responsibility at the feet of Pilate. It might indeed be the case that scholars have illegitimately ignored Pilate's nefarious role. But Carter's attempts to place the blame entirely on the Romans requires a whole series of highly debatable explanations of the details of the passion narrative.

In short, Carter has rendered an invaluable service by elucidating the significant role occupied by Roman imperialism in the background of Matthew's Gospel. Yet readers might well come away from Carter's fine discussion with a sense that such background is limited and that other elements

must be considered to explain many passages and motifs in the Gospel of Matthew.

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Grenz, Stanley J. *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei*. Louisville: John Knox Press, 2001. Pp. 345. \$39.95.

Stanley Grenz is an outstanding Baptist theologian whose work is notable for reflecting on Christian faith in the context of contemporary modes of thought. A number of his books address some aspect of Christian faith and action in the context of so-called postmodernism, the view, broadly, that there is no unified grasp of reality, only differing viewpoints. Truth, in which case, is relative to one's participation in communities of discourse and meaning. This leads to the affirmation of what is local and personal at the expense of what is ostensibly universal.

The present book is a theological anthropology that is cognizant of the intellectual challenges posed by postmodern sensibilities. It is the first volume of a projected six volume series entitled *The Matrix of Christian Theology*, in which Grenz intends to bring Christian faith into enriching conversation with the intellectual shifts within western thought. Given the postmodern loss of the self, Grenz explores the implications of scripture and Christian theological tradition (including its more philosophical aspects) for reaffirming the teaching that humankind is in the image of God. His goal, clear already from the title, is to develop a social understanding of the *imago Dei*.

Grenz begins his inquiry in two ways. He outlines developments in Trinitarian theology over the last hundred years or so, and then presents developments in the understanding of the self that have marked western thinking since Augustine. The discussion reviews material that will be familiar to most readers. However, chapter three, "From Autobiography to Preference," while quite a tough read, was especially helpful in introducing a range of philosophical issues. The conclusion to this first section is especially cogent. "The postmodern ethos is characterized not only by the loss of the self but also by the *embrace* of its demise." What is Christian anthropology to say in response?

The heart of the book is given in chapters four, five, and six. Grenz leads his reader through the exegetical and theological history of the church's understanding of the image of God as structure, relationship, and eschatological goal. Again, there is nothing especially new here, but the handling of the material is impressive. Of special importance for his conclusion is his

highlighting of the New Testament notion of Christ as the divine image. His summary of this masterful middle section of the book suggests that “the biblical narrative of the *imago Dei* moves from creation to Christ and then on to new creation.”

The two concluding chapters address the place of sexuality in Christian anthropology and, as by now anticipated, the social self in the new community. He argues that bonding is the goal of human sexuality, which itself drives us toward community—bonding, unfortunately, remains an underdeveloped idea. Via an *analogia relationis*, however, Grenz makes a connection between human relationality as sexually differentiated and the relational, i.e., Trinitarian, God. The point of connection is Christ who is the true image of God. Through union with Christ one shares in Christ’s relationship to God and, as such, is transformed into the image of God in Christ. It is a short move now to say that this relational self is the ecclesial self, the new humanity in communion with God. Thus he completes his constructive project, which has been to speak about humankind by viewing the human from the perspective of an understanding of God.

This is a wonderful, demanding and important book. It is long (too long?), but one wishes that Grenz had more to say on the ecclesial self, especially the relationship between such a self and the Eucharist. Also, he, along with most advocates of the social Trinity, leaves inadequately treated the problem of the unity of God. However, this reviewer writing as a pastoral theologian welcomes this theological anthropology as a resource in the work of reconstructing pastoral theology upon an adequate foundation, and is happy to place it alongside a book of similar importance, Ellen T. Charry’s, *By the Renewing of Your Mind*.

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Thompson, Marianne Meye. *The God of the Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001. 269 pages; \$22.00.

In her new book on God in the Fourth Gospel, bringing the full fruit of over a decade of research to bear on the subject, Professor Marianne Meye Thompson seeks to remedy what N. A. Dahl calls “The Neglected Factor in New Testament Theology”: namely, adequate discussions of *God*. Scholarly focus on God in the Gospel of John is an especially needed venture because nineteen centuries of Johannine studies have focused primarily upon John’s

distinctive and provocative Christology, and Professor Thompson seeks to shift the appraisal of John's thematic focus from a Christocentric to a Theocentric one. This, of course, runs contrary to Robert Kysar's *Forschungsbericht*, evidencing correctly that "the scholarly mainstream continues to balk at anything but a Christocentric course" when it comes to John's theological framework. Her enlistment of a few other weighty scholars, in addition to Dahl, as harbingers who supposedly "have argued convincingly that Christology is indeed an aspect of theology and only in that perspective properly grasped" remains, however, untempered by the conviction of Oscar Cullmann (*The Christology of the New Testament*, a very important monograph on her subject, neither engaged nor found in her bibliography), that as far as early Christians were concerned, no distinction was made between the first and second articles of faith confessions. For them, Christology *was* Theology, and vice versa. Thompson nonetheless claims to set the record straight with a monograph focusing on one topic: the identity of God in the Fourth Gospel, a work which is complemented by a nearly simultaneous *Semeia* volume on the Father in the Fourth Gospel, in which Thompson has also contributed an essay.

In so doing, Thompson approaches her task within five chapters on "The Meaning of 'God,'" "The Living Father," "The Knowledge of God," "The Spirit of God," and "The Worship of God." These chapters are preceded by a helpful introduction and followed by concluding reflections on "The God of the Gospel of John," which poses helpful implications of her findings for persons of faith today. The book has many strengths. Professor Thompson takes her subject seriously and applies meaningfully much of the best of recent scholarship, while at the same time engaging appropriately relevant subjects in Jewish literature. At the very least, her book shows the pervasiveness of God, "the Father," and references to the Deity in John (far more than any of the other gospels). But, as with John's *Christological* tensions, John is also not without its *Theological* perplexities.

First, while God is indeed an important subject within John, at least 70 of the 80 or so usages of the word, *Theos*, have a direct or indirect reference to Jesus, the Son. In fact, the pervasive reasons for mentioning "God," and even more so, "the Father," in John, relate directly to the emissary role of Jesus as the divine agent and the resulting disputations among those whose understandings of God are threatened by his representative claims. Thompson rightly acknowledges the "functional" character of John's treatment of God, just as John's is a "functional" Christology; but if the latter serves to reach the world with divine revelation and love, the former serves to bolster the authority of the particular agent under discussion, which is why studies of

Jesus and God cannot be separated in John. Thompson, of course, is aware of these facts, and her work confirms that Barrett is indeed justified in referring to John's as a Theocentric Christology. Whether John's framework, or thematic core gets a theological appraisal over and above a christological one, however, has yet to be demonstrated. If anything, Thompson's work shows also that John's is a pervasively *Christocentric Theology*. This volume-length treatment of God in John demonstrates, if nothing else, how centrally just about everything said about God in John is related to the mission and identity of Jesus as the Christ.

At times Thompson's efforts to distance Jesus from categories of deity come across as missing the point of the particular text at hand. In her discussions of John 1:1-3 and 18, for instance, she de-emphasizes the life-giving role of the *Logos*—the primary subject of the passage—not God alone. She also fails to engage that problematic early textual variant about "the only begotten *God*, who is at the Father's side, has made him known to us." One can understand why later copyists replaced *Theos* with *Huios*, but one would have appreciated a monograph on God in John grappling with this knotty matter more than just mentioning it in a note. Confusion then ensues as she opts for the later interpolation, commenting upon the Son being in the bosom of the Father, rather than *God* as a more primitive Johannine reference to the Son. Even Thompson's references to the God who has life in himself in John 5 must be followed by the same attribute being granted to the Son by the Father. Of course, the operative issue here is that the life-giving power of God is now being effected through the Son, and that point is well worth making. However, while Thompson's distancing of John 8:58 from Exodus 3:14 (not a theophanic association in her view, but an emphasis upon life-giving properties) might be soothing to some modern readers, it certainly *was not* to the audience in that virulent chapter. They clearly understood it as a blasphemous claim and began moving Jesus toward a stoning—the standard penalty for blasphemy (Lev. 24:13-16), not disputing the lineage of Abraham or Yahweh's comforting statements in Isaiah. The problem of giving *Theology* its fair due, unencumbered by *Christology* in John, is that there is almost nothing said about God in John that is not also claimed for Jesus as the Son of God, which is why John's Christology has been such a perdurant subject of interest within and beyond Christian theology. Thompson does not, however, discuss the history of those pre-Chalcedonian debates about the Father and the Son in this book, nor does she include monographs by Wiles and Pollard on the Johannine contribution to the history of christological, and therefore theological, debates. Nonetheless, this book offers several ways forward for preserving a monotheistic theology without forsaking the re-

demptive mission and work of the Son when taking the Fourth Gospel seriously.

Coming clear from Thompson's monograph is the cluster of important subjects about God in John related to disputes about Jesus' legitimacy emerging from Jewish-Christian debates in the middle-to-late first-century period. This discussion reflects some of her finest work and the book's most important contribution. Where Jesus adherents emphasized his eschatological role in the unfolding work of redemption and revelation, debates over Jesus' legitimacy and capacity to represent God authentically brought God's authority and workings back into the picture. At stake was (and is) the authentic worship of God, and insights into those first-century debates illumine present discussions on the subject, as well. Central to the majority of texts about God and the Father in John, however, is the agency of the Son who is to be considered equal to the Father *precisely because* he faithfully does nothing except what the Father instructs. Regarding Ashton's question about sons being sent by their fathers as agents, the vineyard owner's sending of his son in all three Synoptic traditions offers a parallel, if not a precedent. While discussing various ways of reconstructing the Jewish *shaliach* figure, whether the agent should be considered in juridical, mystical, angelic, or prophetic terms, Thompson misses the originative locus of these expressions, which is the prophet like Moses outlined in Deuteronomy 18:15–22 (a text not even mentioned in her book). Especially in John, the roles of God and the Father are centrally connected to the sending of a messenger who will not speak any words but God's, about whom God will hold his hearers to account, and whose words come true because he speaks entirely on behalf of God alone. It is these sets of issues that John's audiences debated, questioning Jesus' legitimacy as the authentic agent sent from God (and thus having equal-to-God status), and it is around setting these issues straight that most of John's presentations of Jesus the Son and God the Father revolve.

This causes just one more problem with Professor Thompson's structuring of her thesis—perhaps a geometric or spatial one. God *is* indeed the purported source of the Son's mission and authority in John. And, Thompson also argues correctly that the goal and teleology of John's Christology *is* to lead the reader/hearer into an experience of the eternal life availed by God. But if God is the beginning *and* the end of John's design, why emphasize a *Theocentric* appraisal of John structure? If God is the origin, the end goal, *and* the center of the Gospel of John, then what do we do with Jesus, and why has John's Christology been the central Johannine interest until now? John's narrative structure is still Christocentric, and its *Theological* ballast functions as the predominant coin used by Jesus adherents—and their adversaries—in

calling the hearer/reader to a response of faith to the divine initiative manifested in Jesus as God's Son. This may explain why most features attributed to God are also claimed for the Son, and this is why even the best monograph on God in the Fourth Gospel in recent years—an accolade this book likely deserves—still fails to supplant John's Christological interest and emphasis. After all, Nils Alstrup Dahl also said about John's outrageous story and its contextual setting (in "The Johannine Church and History," John Ashton, ed., *The Interpretation of John*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997; an article Thompson does not cite): "The whole outlook of the Fourth Gospel is characterized by its *consistent Christocentricity*" (emphasis mine). While Barrett and Thompson are right to emphasize the Theocentricity of John's Christology, it must also be said that the primary function of John's Theology is the bolstering of its pervasive Christocentricity. And, Marianne Meye Thompson, by focusing on God in the Fourth Gospel helps us consider anew how this is so.

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Holmes, Stephen R., ed. *God of Grace and God of Glory: An Account of the Theology of Jonathan Edwards*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001. Pp. 289. \$38.00.

This is a useful book. Stephen R. Holmes does a good job in presenting an introduction to Jonathan Edwards' theology. Indeed Edwards' theology is Holmes's primary concern, not so much Edwards as philosopher or as psychologist of religious experience, or even as preacher. Rather it is Edwards as a theologian, within a particular theological tradition, that is the focus of attention and the book's main contribution. Holmes states that "Edwards' life and writings make sense only when it is realized that the controlling vision was theological." Holmes presents Edwards' thought within the context of Reformed theology. Theological influences on Edwards such as Francois Turretin and Petrus van Mastricht, who have been overlooked in most studies, are given due consideration by Holmes. The idea of God's glory is the organizing principle of Holmes's presentation of Edwards' theology. Thus, Holmes presents Edwards' theological system as radically theocentric. For Holmes, Edwards' view of "God in Himself," not human relationships to God, approaches the center of Edwards' system.

Holmes interacts with the relevant scholarly literature on Edwards, from

Perry Miller's groundbreaking work to the studies by more recent interpreters such as Robert Jenson and Michael McClymond. Holmes's is the first significant monograph seriously to interact with the interpretation of Edwards' theology by John Gerstner. Gerstner's older work on Edwards' theology of preparationism is well known. However, Holmes engages Gerstner in his more recent three-volume work on *The Rational Biblical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*. Such engagement is a welcome addition to the Edwards scholarship. Holmes also notes the important, though seldom cited Harvard doctoral dissertation by Krister Sairsingh entitled "Jonathan Edwards and the Idea of Divine Glory: His Foundational Trinitarianism and its Ecclesial Import." Holmes's relating of Edwards' theology at several key points to that of Karl Barth is not only instructive, but suggests the usefulness of a more comprehensive comparative study. The exposition of Edwards' ecclesiology, however, could have benefited from a reading of Gerald R. McDermott's work *One Holy and Happy Society: The Public Theology of Jonathan Edwards*.

Holmes adequately addresses the potentially problematical circumstance of a non-American, who comes from an English Baptist tradition, interpreting the theology of the one who has been called "America's theologian." However, the repetition of terms like "whilst" and "amongst" throughout the book underscore the "alienness" of the interpreter. The editorial revision of such terminology would be an easy and welcome improvement. Also, some of the issues discussed are perhaps overly specialized matters within Reformed theology. For example, was Edwards a supralapsarian or infralapsarian? Or was he consistent with Calvin on the question of limited atonement? These discussions may be a bit too intramural and tangential for most readers. One point of disagreement with Holmes's generally sound interpretation of Edwards' thought concerns the important and distinctive Edwardsean doctrine of the "sense of the heart." Holmes neglects to assert that in addition to a new mode of perception the sense of the heart for Edwards also involves an actual experience of what is perceived as sensible, experiential knowledge. For example, Edwards' notion of the sense of the heart not only brings a new perception of beauty, it is itself an actual experience of the beautiful.

I recommend this book as a useful introduction to Edwards' theology. It is also a helpful addition to the scholarship on Jonathan Edwards, emphasizing the Reformed theological context and character of Edwards' thought.

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McGrath, Alister E. *A Scientific Theology: Nature*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. Pp. 320. \$40.00.

In *Nature*, volume 1 of a planned trilogy, Alister McGrath identifies his work "as an extended essay which explores the contours of a possible approach to a scientific theology." It is important to note from the outset that the present volume, and the trilogy as a whole, is more about theological method than examination of specific doctrines, though specific doctrines receive appropriate attention. The central idea is to "explore the relation between Christian theology and the natural sciences, using philosophy and history as dialogue partners." At the end of *Nature*, McGrath intends to have shown that attempts to ignore the natural sciences for theology are as misguided as the common over-exaggeration of their import.

The flow of McGrath's argument is reasonably straightforward, consisting of six chapters which may be quickly summarized as comprising four movements. The first two chapters orient the reader with a more precise statement of the project and a brief survey of the author's methodological pre-commitments. Chapter three examines different ways in which the term *nature* has been conceived, and it concludes with the recognition that, for the Christian, nature must be understood as *creation*. The next movement, comprising chapters four and five, constitutes the core of the presentation as the details and implications of *nature as creation* are developed. McGrath provides the material for the concluding chapter wherein he answers the question, Where in the broader theological enterprise does a *natural theology* fit? For McGrath, it is clear that, when understood as he proposes, natural theology is an important and complimentary source of divine revelation. Explicitly, he writes: "It is wrong to treat natural theology and revealed theology as being opposed to each other, *provided* that nature is construed in a trinitarian manner as the creation of the self-revealing God." Overall, McGrath's argument is clearly presented, well documented, and guided by a firm commitment to classical Christian orthodoxy.

Yet, I have a couple concerns. First, the lesser: one of McGrath's conversation partners is Karl Barth, yet McGrath's effort to rehabilitate Barth's critique of "natural theology" seems more a distraction than a help. McGrath's arguments supporting the "two book" approach (seeing revelation in the book of Scripture and the "book" of nature) are well presented and quite persuasive. Hence, it is not at all clear why McGrath feels the need to attempt to deconstruct the prevalent perception that Barth strongly opposed any attempt at natural theology. Further, I must admit that I remain skeptical that the rehabilitation of Barth works.

My greater concern is McGrath's treatment of the "autonomy of creation" and the manner in which he conceives sin affecting humanity's ability to "read" the book of nature. Interestingly, the author notes that Turretini allowed "that it is possible to be saved on the basis of a natural knowledge of God," and that, through Turretini, the Genevan "Academy which had once taken its stand on Scripture had now succumbed to the rationalist pressures of the age." However, it seems Romans 1 and 2 show that Paul allows that those who do not hear the Gospel may well be excused (thus, being saved) on the basis of their response to what they see in nature. Earlier, McGrath admits, in a discussion of nature's causal powers, that God may choose to grant autonomy to his creation. In the latter part of the book, however, the author seems to get unnecessarily entangled in concerns about the "intrinsic" ability of the creation to reveal God. Staying with his theme of *nature as creation*, however, should have obviated issues like this, for then we could simply say that it follows directly from the affirmation that God creates *ex nihilo* that the creation reveals God precisely to the degree he intends. Further, as a God whose love is over all his creation and who knows that not all will hear the Gospel, we may affirm that God provides even for those who will not hear. Natural revelation is the mechanism whereby God makes such provision. Similarly, there is undue concern with the negative effects of the fall on human knowing. Again, does it not follow directly from *creatio ex nihilo* that the effects of the fall could be no worse than God allowed? In other words, God was not surprised by sin, and the impact sin had on human noetic abilities could not extend beyond God's provision. So, while we affirm that sin darkens human understanding, there is no reason to think God's initial creative act did not allow for this contingency. Hence, there is no reason to fret over God's intended revelation through nature being thwarted by human sin.

While I think these issues deserve attention and a more nuanced treatment than McGrath provides, these concerns do not threaten the core of the book's argument, and we must extend our appreciation to McGrath for his thoughtful defense of the role of a theology of nature, taken, of course, as creation of the trinitarian God.

Charles Gutenson
Asbury Theological Seminary

Noll, Mark A. *The Old Religion in a New World: The History of North American Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. Pp. 340. \$24.00.

Mark Noll is a distinguished historian of Christianity at Wheaton College and a prolific publisher of studies about Christianity in modern America.

Among them, several have concerned Princeton, especially the formative years of the Theological Seminary as well as traditions in the earlier College of New Jersey. A decade ago, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Eerdmans, 1992) demonstrated the breadth of his competence and the range of his learning. Its intellectual scope was notable for exploring the multiple sources for, and guises taken by, Christianity in North America. It was also noteworthy for its sense of openness about the variety of movements and personalities that comprise this history. At almost 600 pages in length, however, friends and admirers of the author had some concerns about whether the volume would receive the wide use it so clearly deserved. At first glance, the current project appears to be a felicitous supplement, possibly making the substance of the former available as an "easier read." That assumption would be misleading, for this undertaking deserves attention and wide use as a free standing volume in its own right.

Indeed, *The Old Religion* was occasioned more directly by an intervening publication by Noll, a briefer discussion of Christianity in North America written for a European series, specifically for readers of German. In part translating and presenting sections of *Das Christentum in Nordamerika*, *The Old Religion* is organized into some dozen chapters. Six of them define periods: colonization (to 1730), Americanization (to 1830), Protestant dominance (through 1865), plural Christianities (through 1906), repeated recasting through a period of world wars (to 1960) and the "recent past" that ends with the new century. The other six chapters are organized more thematically. The first delineates the great complexity of Christianity's migration to North America. A pair of chapters concern the "separation of church and state" as a signature question, and the problematic of theology in America. Others address the fate of indelibly European traditions—especially those of Lutherans and Roman Catholics, offer comparisons with Christianity in Canada and Mexico, and discuss the roles of the Bible and spirituality among the people.

A reviewer of this work might offer minor quibbles about specific interpretations or express disappointment about particular emphases. But to indulge in such comments in a brief review would distort the fundamental point that he or she should make. Noll has given us a broad and engaging account of how an already complex religious movement (Christianity) became further differentiated in its migration to a new and rapidly expanding continent. His point of view positions a reader to reflect on the next events already taking place in this new century as Christianity shares social space with cognate Jewish and Muslim traditions as well as vital Asian religions. Noll's new book is strongly recommended, then, not because it is an easy-to-

take or "lite" version of his larger *History*, but because it is a challenging presentation of a perspective in which North American Christianity in the twenty-first century may be best comprehended as that century begins. *The Old Religion* deserves both to be widely read and broadly discussed.

John F. Wilson
Princeton University

Pilgrim, Walter E. *Uneasy Neighbors: Church and State in the New Testament*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999. Pp. 225. \$20.00.

This helpful guide to the New Testament's varied teachings on the inter-relationships of church and government is exegetically sound, theologically astute, and pastorally relevant. Walter Pilgrim does not break a lot of new ground in the book, but he does provide a comprehensive survey of the field, abetted by an organizational scheme that makes the information accessible and memorable. Pilgrim is recently retired as Professor of New Testament at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington. He is also the author of *Good News to the Poor: Wealth and Poverty in Luke-Acts* (Augsburg, 1981).

Pilgrim discerns three principal trajectories in New Testament teaching on church and state, and he argues that all three of these have their time and place for relevance in particular situations. An ethic of subordination is discernible in Paul and certain post-Pauline texts (the Pastorals, 1 Peter, Hebrews). According to this view, governing authorities rule by divine right and Christians owe allegiance to political rulers as instruments of God (Rom. 13:1-7). Such a view seems most appropriate for situations in which the government attempts to fulfill its divine mandate of serving the public good, especially through establishment of justice. At the opposite end of the spectrum of biblical views, an ethic of resistance evident in Revelation, regards government as demonic and inherently tyrannical. Pilgrim argues that adoption of such an (apocalyptic) perspective remains realistic in settings in which government abdicates all responsibility for preserving justice and becomes fundamentally hostile to civic welfare (e.g., in Nazi Germany and the apartheid state of South Africa). Mediating between these extremes is an ethic of critical distancing that derives from the posture of Jesus and remains prevalent in the Gospels. Jesus did not seek to overthrow the political order or deny its legitimacy, but he also did not hesitate to challenge the idolatrous and abusive practices of those who "lord over" others (Mark 10:42). Such a view may be recommended for contexts in which "authority errs, but can be realistically moved to salutary change."

Pilgrim is honest in his delineation of these disparate notions, avoiding the

temptation to force compatibility on options that must, in some sense, be allowed to remain irreconcilable. Still, he does seem to prefer "critical distancing" as the default position for the church, as the view that most Christians should take most of the time. More realistic than subordination and more nuanced than resistance, it is also the most complicated stance. Both those who call Caesar "Lord" and those who call Caesar "Satan" find matters simply resolved, but those committed to "rendering unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar" must engage in considerable and difficult reflection as to what that properly means. So, Pilgrim concludes with a survey of several instances in which the church has attempted to enact this ethic in recent U.S. history, engaging the state with regard to civil rights, the Vietnam War, illegal immigrants, nuclear deterrence, protection of the environment, economic justice, and other issues. In all of these matters, church and state have been "uneasy neighbors," not enemies, but partners in a relationship marked by tension and competing goals.

My quibbles with Pilgrim's analyses would be minor. I do think that the apocalyptic perspective creeps into the Gospel tradition (Luke 4:5-6) and Pauline/deutero-Pauline material (2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2, 6:12) to a greater extent than he acknowledges. His understanding of Matthew's Gospel could be enhanced by consideration of Warren Carter's several writings on Matthew and empire. On a deeper level, further consideration may need to be paid to the question of whether the dichotomy of "church and state" is not itself anachronistic and self-serving. To the extent that the church becomes a social reality and a governing institution in its own right, it loses immunity from any critique it would offer of what Pilgrim repeatedly calls "the powers that be." Thus, Pilgrim rightly notes that the church must regard the government (of the state) with healthy suspicion, "constantly on the alert against the temptations and abuses" of power. I would add that believers in Jesus Christ must adopt a similar stance with respect to the government of the church.

Mark Allan Powell
Trinity Lutheran Seminary

Sellner, Edward C. *Mentoring: The Ministry of Spiritual Kinship*. Cambridge, Mass: Cowley Publications, 2002. Pp. 185. \$12.95.

How do we grow and learn spiritually? This is the question at the heart of Edward Sellner's book. And he takes mentoring to be at the heart of our becoming persons. Indeed radical mutuality, so the Christian tradition claims, is at the heart of reality. We become who we are only in relationship. We learn by imitation and relearn by reaction and rebellion, and we learn

again by companionship. This doesn't mean that solitude isn't important, for solitude is a requirement for true intimacy. If we cannot be alone with ourselves we cannot be truly present with and to others. Many people—stressed and depressed—suffer from spiritual and mental exhaustion. The poet David Whyte quotes his mentor as telling him that “the antidote to exhaustion is not necessarily rest. The antidote to exhaustion is wholeheartedness.” We need help to move through our suffering and grieving and to open ourselves up for joy and celebration—to live wholeheartedly.

Human beings long to be centered, and the irony is that often what we need is readily available to us in the ordinary friendships and relationships of everyday life. Most of us want somebody who will listen, somebody to be there for us. If we are open to it, mentoring goes on all the time, in informal ways. Often it is simply a ministry of presence and, if we are awake, we discern that God is always trying to reach us through the books we read, the movies we see and the music we hear. Just as the world is a sacrament, so experiences are mentors.

Sellner uses C.S. Lewis as his central example. Over the years I have become less and less a fan of Lewis but Sellner's treatment of him challenged me to take a second look. Lewis rightly enunciates a key principle of the spiritual life: “We are members one of another whether we choose to recognize the fact or not.” Lewis understood this but he could be pretty hard-nosed in his judgments (until he dived into life when he married Joy Davidman and endured the grief of her dying). Lewis, it seems to me, became more human after that.

I particularly liked both Sellner's acknowledgement that we all have an inner drive to be somebody and his emphasis on the *call* to be human. Becoming human is a vocation and it takes a long time to live into it. It is a call to life and it takes courage to share our lives and stories in the midwifery of becoming. This shouldn't be taken in the narrowly religious sense. He quotes James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: “His heart trembled in an ecstasy of fear and his soul was in flight. This was the call to life to his soul not the dull gross voice of the world of duties and despair. To live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life.”

There's a prayer from the early church: “O God, make us truly alive!” This book will be a source of nourishment for those already familiar with the tradition of spiritual direction and a well-spring of inspiration for those who are not. It is an excellent introduction to the tradition. Written in an easy and accessible style, it deserves a wide audience.

Alan Jones

Grace Cathedral, San Francisco

Speight, R. Marston. *God is One: The Way of Islam*. Second edition with Afterword and Study Guide. New York: Friendship Press, 2001. Pp. 139. \$9.95.

September 11, 2001, has generated an unprecedented interest in Islam among American Christians. Friendship Press of the National Council of Churches thought it timely to publish a second edition of *God is One: The Way of Islam*, providing Christian congregations and individuals with this accessible introduction to "Islam as a way of life." R. Marston Speight for thirteen years served as the director of the Office of Christian-Muslim Relations of the National Council of Churches. In this book he seeks to overcome common misunderstandings of this major world religion and to give the western Christian reader a "sympathetic" view of Islam, i.e., a view of Islam held by Muslims themselves. *God is One: The Way of Islam* is written on a level appropriate for laypersons having little or no prior knowledge of Islam.

The book is divided into two sections. Chapters one to four are a presentation of Islam as a way of life, while chapters five and six are an introduction to Christian-Muslim relations. In chapter one, "Why Is It Important To Know About Islam?," the reader learns about the sheer number of Muslims in the world (over a billion), their involvement in current affairs, the persistence of western misunderstandings of them, and the need for Christians to understand Islam on Islamic terms if the church is to be a faithful Christian witness in Muslim-Christian interaction.

Chapter two, "The Foundation of Islam" briefly surveys the historical setting of the rise of Islam, the life of the Prophet Muhammad, those of his early followers, the significance of the Qur'an and the confession of faith ("The Witness" or *shahada*: "I witness that there is no deity except God, and I witness that Muhammad is the messenger of God"). The irenic tenor of the book is expressed well in the following passage regarding Muhammad: "Muhammad was the seal of the prophets, meaning that after him no other prophets would come. He lived the best of lives, ever faithful to his family, helpful to the needy, enduring in the face of trial, persevering in the tasks he had to perform, indulgent, kind, and gentle toward others."

Chapter three, "Islamic Patterns of Life" is the core of the book, presenting the way of Islam through its "five pillars," and he emphasizes on the high moral standards and attention to social responsibility that exist among Muslims. Speight attempts to overcome western misunderstandings about the role of women in Islam, concluding that "Islam as a way of life does not have a bias against women" and that historically "Muslims have no better

or worse a record than Christians in living up to their ideals." Chapter four, "Great Themes of Islamic Life" presents the unity of Islam as transcending all regional and factional barriers. It also notes some key distinctions in the Islamic community, such as that between the Sunnis and the Shi'a.

The final two chapters include a brief survey of the history of Muslim-Christian interaction, followed by suggestions for the way forward into a more peaceful future. Speight favors a "spirit of conciliation," by which he means a disposition that recognizes universal truth is inaccessible, such that attempts at claiming the necessity of conversion will only be divisive and a hindrance to peaceful co-existence. Rather, Speight praises figures such as Wilfred Cantwell Smith, who show us how the modern world "affords an unprecedented opportunity" for Christians "to participate with Muslims as well as with believers from other religions in the ongoing multiform religious evolution of humankind." Speight looks forward and sees that the "future is opening, as barriers fall between believers." He emphasizes the fact that Christians and Muslims largely agree over matters of morality and social justice, and he encourages members of each religion to give greater weight to this commonality than to doctrinal disagreements.

Perhaps needless to say, many Christians will not agree with the approach Speight suggests in this second section of the book. Congregations whose piety and ethos are grounded in a high Christology and shaped by the classical Christian tradition will certainly find it lacking in a number of areas. Speight's inattention to Muslim-Christian divergence on issues such as the uniqueness of Christ, the historicity of the crucifixion, the triunity of God—to name just a few—makes the book of limited usefulness for those Christians seeking to engage in Muslim-Christian relations without sacrificing a commitment to the affirmations of the early ecumenical creeds. More helpful in this regard are Moucarrý's *The Prophet and the Messiah: an Arab Christian's Perspective on Islam and Christianity* (IVP, 2002), and Ramachandra's *Faiths in Conflict?* (IVP, 1999). On the other hand, Christians who can affirm that the ecumenical dictum "service unites, doctrine divides," extends beyond Christianity into Muslim-Christian relations, will feel at home with Speight's approach. What everyone can learn from this book is the necessity of avoiding simplistic misunderstandings of Islam.

The reader should be somewhat cautious about a number of overly conciliatory statements in the book. These include: "the Qur'anic story of Abraham's sacrifice is not very different from that of the Bible"; or that the Qur'an contains "clear affirmation of equality between the sexes"; or that "Christians generally do not accept Muhammad as a prophet because they do

not know about him. Once they learn the facts of his life and accomplishments, they usually have no difficulty in accepting him as a prophet." Other statements appear dated: "There has never been any legal hindrance to a woman practicing a profession or seeking work outside the home."

Despite some shortcomings in the book, the first section remains a useful introduction to Islam, especially because it is presented from the point of view of Muslim self-understanding. As such, it provides readers with the crucial first step in any constructive dialogue between Muslims and Christians.

Finally, the study-guide and Afterword added in this second edition greatly enhance the book's usefulness. The study guide will serve as a springboard for leaders seeking to engage small groups in learning and discussion, making the task of starting such a group less intimidating. The Afterword, written by a separate team of scholars from Hartford Seminary, expands on the main text of the book (which remains the same as that of the first edition). It addresses some issues in greater detail, especially matters that are of pressing concern after September 11, 2001, such as: western influences on conservative approaches to Islamic law among some Muslim jurists, and the western world's role in creating the societal norms in some Muslim countries now evermore at odds with the West. Westerners are also encouraged to appreciate the many differences of opinion among Muslims themselves. Such an appreciation may guard against unhelpful, sweeping judgments about Islam.

Michael R. Walker
Princeton Theological Seminary

VanElderén, Marlin. *Finding a Voice: Communicating the Ecumenical Movement*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. Pp. 171. \$15.00.

Marlin VanElderén served nearly two decades as editor of *One World*, the magazine of the World Council of Churches. This book is a selection of his insightful reflections on the conciliar movement and the world in which it functions, originally written as editorials for the magazine. They usually begin with observations on some specific issue or event but always go beyond to consider their wider implications. Thus the book is not a history but a series of commentaries on current issues in the church and society. The essays offer refreshing insights and stimuli to more faithful discipleship,

whatever our church or theological position may be. For those seeking to relate the Gospel to social and political issues, there is a host of informative sermons here.

The writer constantly pushes insights to deepen ecumenical discourse to the edge and challenges his readers to ask the "so what" questions. He is never satisfied simply with holding consultations and producing more documents. He affirms that we talk too glibly about the "church's agenda," and continues, "Do we not, particularly when talking about mission, too often forget that 'agenda' means that which is to be done, not just that which is to be talked about, analyzed, and compared?"

A second theme is the concern for those whose voices are rarely heard. But here VanElderin is realistic and honest. He suggests that "Finding a Voice" involves the recognition that there are many voices which often do not blend well. This must lead us to seek to listen to those voices which so often are ignored by the media and the churches. He gives examples which push us to consider groups we often ignore, such as Ghananian refugees in Nigeria and the millions of undocumented workers in Europe, the United States, Australia, and the Persian Gulf states.

A third theme is the necessity of "passionate certainty about the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the way of life it calls us to." Deeply committed to ecumenism, he is nevertheless concerned about some united churches in which it seems one may believe anything or nothing. He rightly recognizes that the ecumenical movement can only move forward with purpose and power if it is centered in this "passionate certainty."

My primary criticism of the book has to do with the issues it does not discuss. The original focus of the World Council was unity for the sake of mission, "that the world might believe." That theme is curiously and tragically missing from these meditations. But I believe this is more a reflection of the agenda of the WCC than that of the author. We live in a period in which many of the rapidly growing churches in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, along with some in North America, primarily Pentecostal and Charismatic, remain outside the sphere of the WCC. In addition there is the rapidly growing cross-cultural missionary movement from those areas, now probably three times as large as the movement from the United States. Most of these groups are not much concerned with unity, at least not in any structural sense. But they are passionately concerned to evangelize those who have never heard the Christian message, in understandable terms. It appears to me that the major challenge to the ecumenical movement today is how to bring these two streams of the Church together in constructive dialog through

which each can learn from the other. This is admittedly a difficult task but it is essential if the WCC is to return to its original vision.

Paul E. Pierson
Fuller Theological Seminary

Montgomery, Robert L. *The Lopsided Spread of Christianity: Toward an Understanding of the Diffusion of Religions*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002. Pp. 190. \$64.95.

The author has all the qualifications for writing a book which deals with both missiological and sociological issues. He grew up in China of missionary parents, served in Taiwan as a missionary to the aboriginal tribal minorities. He received the Ph.D. Degree from Emory University, where he studied in the field of the social scientific study of religion. His earlier book was entitled *The Diffusion of Religions: A Sociological Perspective* (Preager: 1999).

In this volume, Montgomery seeks to answer the question why Christianity has grown faster in some countries and cultures than others. A case in point is the fact that Christianity grew rapidly to the West but slowly, if at all, to the East. This growth west came in spite of the fact that the culture of the early Christians was probably closer to the cultures of east Asia than they were to the Greeks and Romans.

To answer this question, Montgomery seeks to identify the variables that would account for the differences in growth. He develops his theme clearly and convincingly. Five independent variables were chosen which the author applied to the spread of Christianity. Since the spread of Christianity within the Roman empire is well know, the author concentrates on the regions of the East. The five variables chosen were: (1) missionary orientation and drive, (2) geography, (3) intersocietal relationships, (4) sociocultural characteristics and (5) perceptions of Christianity. The first and second variables are easily understood. Numbers three, four, and five are more difficult. Variable three relates to the relationship between the country of origin and the receiving society. Variable four deals with the cultural characteristics of the receiving society, which influenced its acceptance of other cultures. Variable five dealt primarily with the perception of Christianity as a foreign religion.

Having selected the variables, the author applies them to the spread of Christianity to Persia, India, and Central Asia and China. (Here a map would have been helpful.) The framework of the five variables is then applied to the rise of Islam and its effect in retarding the growth of Christianity.

The author concludes that the first three variables "did not seem ultimately to make a difference between success and failure in the spread of Christianity

westward and eastward from Jerusalem." The inclusion of "missionary drive and orientation" here is surprising. From the author's point of view, missionary drive was of critical importance in specific cases, but the Christianity that spread East was essentially the same Christianity that spread West. There was little difference and yet it spread in one direction and not the other. The author concludes that it was a combination of the fourth and fifth variables "that were the most crucial variables in understanding what made the difference in the failure and success of Christianity in spreading to the peoples considered." The crucial difference seems to have been the degree to which a society held a monopolistic view of religion and to what extent religious pluralism was accepted.

In the concluding chapter the author takes a closer look at religious pluralism—past, present and future. Montgomery writes that "pluralism is having an increasing impact in all societies around the world." Yet its future is anything but assured in the countries covered by this study. Pluralism is anathema in Islamic countries. The peaceful co-existence of Hinduism and Islam has seen one set back after another. In recent months there has been a sharp increase in the number of attacks on Christians in India, Indonesia, Pakistan and Sudan.

The author was writing before 9-11. It would be interesting to see any post-scripts that he would add in the light of this recent world shaking event. The author writes as a sociologist to sociologists. For a layman not at home in this technical vocabulary, the text was at times difficult. But sociology is a discipline with which missiology must learn to relate and this book is a good beginning.

G. Thompson Brown
Columbia Theological Seminary

McGrath, Alister E., *The Future of Christianity*. Malden: Blackwell, 2002. Pp. 172. \$17.95.

"This book is written from a western perspective – a perspective that will be shared with most of its readers. Yet it is essential not to judge the future of Christianity by its fate in the West. Its future lies in the largely unreported growth in Africa and Asia. In the West we may hear little more than the melancholy low roar of an ebbing tide. Yet elsewhere the tide is flowing and new possibilities emerging."

These sentences summarize the conclusion of this study by A.E. McGrath, Professor of Historical Theology, University of Oxford, and Principle of its

Wycliffe Hall. The positive side of this evaluation relates to the Asian countries particularly Korea (and China) as well as to developments in the southern half of African continent. It is not only the statistics which allow for such a positive prognosis; it is also the growing emancipation of African and Asian churches. They are developing a far reaching "indigenization" of their church life in accordance with their specific culture. Such a "globalization" of Christian story and history opens fresh and hopeful perspective for the "Future of Christianity."

This cannot be claimed for the western churches. A century ago, it was still possible to dream about "the christianization of the world in this generation." Today, such dreams appear as sheer fantasy. The situation in Europe and in the US may be in some respect different. In Europe, particularly in the countries traditionally shaped by state churches, the system has lost much of its credibility. Thus, a type of religious monopoly, restricting the religious options, has alienated many, particularly the younger generation. The United States has offered traditionally a more open "market of religious options." But even here traditional churches lose. McGrath is sceptical about the future of denominationalism. "Hegemony of 'mainline' Protestant churches has been recognized as an artifact belonging to an earlier age of American religious life."

The author sees signs of the future rather in some new expressions of Christian life: in "community churches" such as Willow Creek, or in "communities in Exile" trying to overcome the "cultural captivity" of consumerist civilization by living out a life of "radical obedience." As far as broad movements of spiritual life are concerned, his sympathy belongs to ecumenical trends of Pentecostal and Evangelical orientation.

And the ecumenical movement itself? McGrath is sarcastically critical of the World Council of Churches: It "had become something as a joke. . . The Council appears as a Kafkaesque creature distinguished by a self-perpetuating incompetency. . . It was widely seen as having been hijacked by a liberal clique." For those of us who have been involved in the WCC work, this is a onesided caricature. More positive is the author's evaluation of informal meetings among theologically concerned churchmen particularly from evangelical, Roman Catholic and some Orthodox circles. This "grassroots ecumenism," soundly rooted in classical trinitarian and Christological tradition, "has worked where the creaking bureaucracies and institutions are seen to have failed. Will this approach take over in the next century?"

The concluding chapter of the book deals with "The Disillusionment with Academic Theology." The crisis of the Western Christianity is to a high degree a crisis of academic theology: its separation from the living congre-

gations and its prevailing subservience to its academic environment. It is essential for the future of Christianity to overcome the gap between abstract "academic theology" and the "theology of the pew." Thus the final message of the book (the author calls it "Manifesto") sounds: "It is time to end the Babylonian captivity of the thinking Christian and return to Jerusalem, there to sing the songs of Zion in our own language." I agree. But, at the same time, the Christian way to the future has to overcome another gap: the one between our churches and their local and global troubled societies. We should not adapt the message to the spirits of current cultural trends, but rather confront them with the good news, with its hopeful promises and urgent demands for greater justice. In this sense, there is no guarantee, but there is the *mission*, for the Christianity of the future.

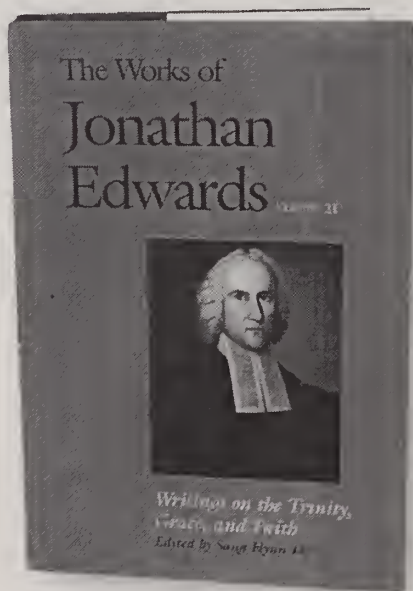
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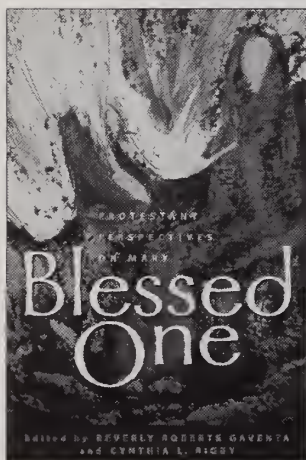
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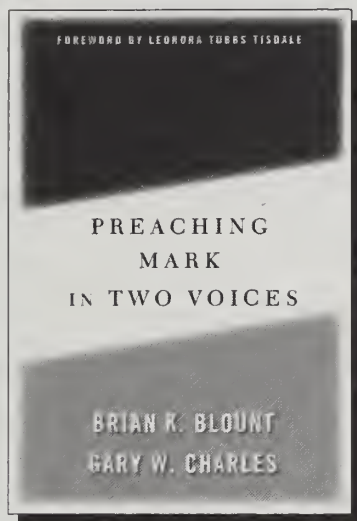
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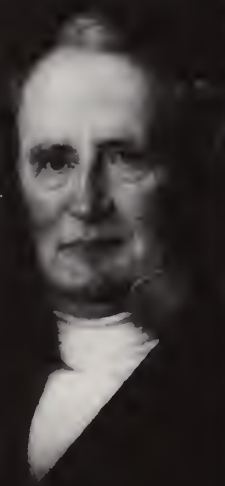
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